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5 Years of the Build It House

Has Our Self Build Stood the Test of Time?

ICF: The Modern Way to Build

Saving Energy

- Retrofit Insulation
- Solar PV
- Eco Fires & Stoves

Self Build Mortgages: How to Get a Better Offer

Smart Lighting Guide

Barn Conversions: Tips for a Class Q Project

Small is Beautiful

How a Modest Extension Can Transform Your Home

AMAZING REAL PROJECTS

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Welcome

In November 2019, we delivered an industry first, completing our very own self build: Build It's Self Build Education House, in partnership with the Graven Hill custom build site. We tracked the design, construction and fit-out in the pages of this magazine and online (at **www.self-build.co.uk/ourhouse**), sharing the highs, lows, challenges, successes and costs with you in detail, to help you make a success of your own projects. Since then, the Build It House has won a RICS Award, welcomed thousands of visitors looking for advice and inspiration through its doors, and used the learnings from our build to deliver the UK's most detailed and practical self build and renovation magazine. Five years on, we're taking a look back at the key decisions we made along the way, chatting with some of the partners we worked with, and investigating whether our pioneering self build project has stood the test of time. Head to page 82 for our Build It House review.

We have plenty more fantastic content for you this issue, including inspiring reader homes (page 27), clever ideas for basements (page 17) and small-but-mighty extensions (page 58), plus advice on everything from Class Q barn conversions (page 88) to smart lighting (page 72) and the pros, cons, costs and savings of solar PV (page 98). And there's more to come! I'm writing a week after a spectacular Build It Awards night, where our independent judging panel's 2024 winners were announced. We were inundated with exceptional projects and products this year, so the judges had their work cut out for them just selecting the shortlist, let alone the winners. We'll be sharing all the details in our winner's guide, published with the February 2025 issue – be sure to pick up your copy to shortlist the very best options for your own project and specify with confidence!

Chris

CHRIS BATESMITH, CONTENT DIRECTOR

EDITOR'S FAVOURITE FEATURES

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2019 2025
THE BUILD IT EDUCATION HOUSE
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expert help
SOLAR PV
IS IT RIGHT FOR ME?

COVER IMAGE: THE ROSES' STUNNING SELF BUILD BY SCANDIA-HUS (PAGE 28). PHOTO: FOURWALLS

MEET THE TEAM

SANDER TEL is Build It's digital features editor. Alongside putting together inspiring content at www.self-build.co.uk, on page 17 he's looking at nine wow -factor basement extensions.

ERIKA CHAFFEY is Build It's features writer. Alongside sourcing the latest news and products, on page 64 she's looking at what you need to know about ICF construction.

JULIA RIDDLE is a planning consultant with a wealth of experience in self and custom build housing. This month she's investigating the ins and outs of class Q planning rules (page 88).

NIGEL GRIFFITHS is Build It's sustainability expert, specialising in eco building and renewable energy. On page 98, he's exploring whether solar PV is the right fit for your project.

JULIAN OWEN is Build It's design doctor and a self build architect with his own practice. In this issue, he's taking a look at custom build design codes and plot passports (page 91).

KATE SANDHU is a renovation expert, with a deep knowledge of project management and how to approach a refurb. Read her latest articles online at www.self-build.co.uk/kate.

OPINDER LIDDAR is a Build It Award-winning architect and director of Lapd Architects. He is a regular expert at Build It Live. Read more from Opinder at www.self-build.co.uk/opinder

MARTIN GAINE is a former council case officer turned independent planning consultant. He is a regular expert at Build It Live. You can read his planning guides at www.self-build.co.uk/martin

ALAN TIERNEY is a historic buildings expert and conservation specialist. For advice on your heritage project, speak to him at Build It Live or check out his articles at www.self-build.co.uk/alan

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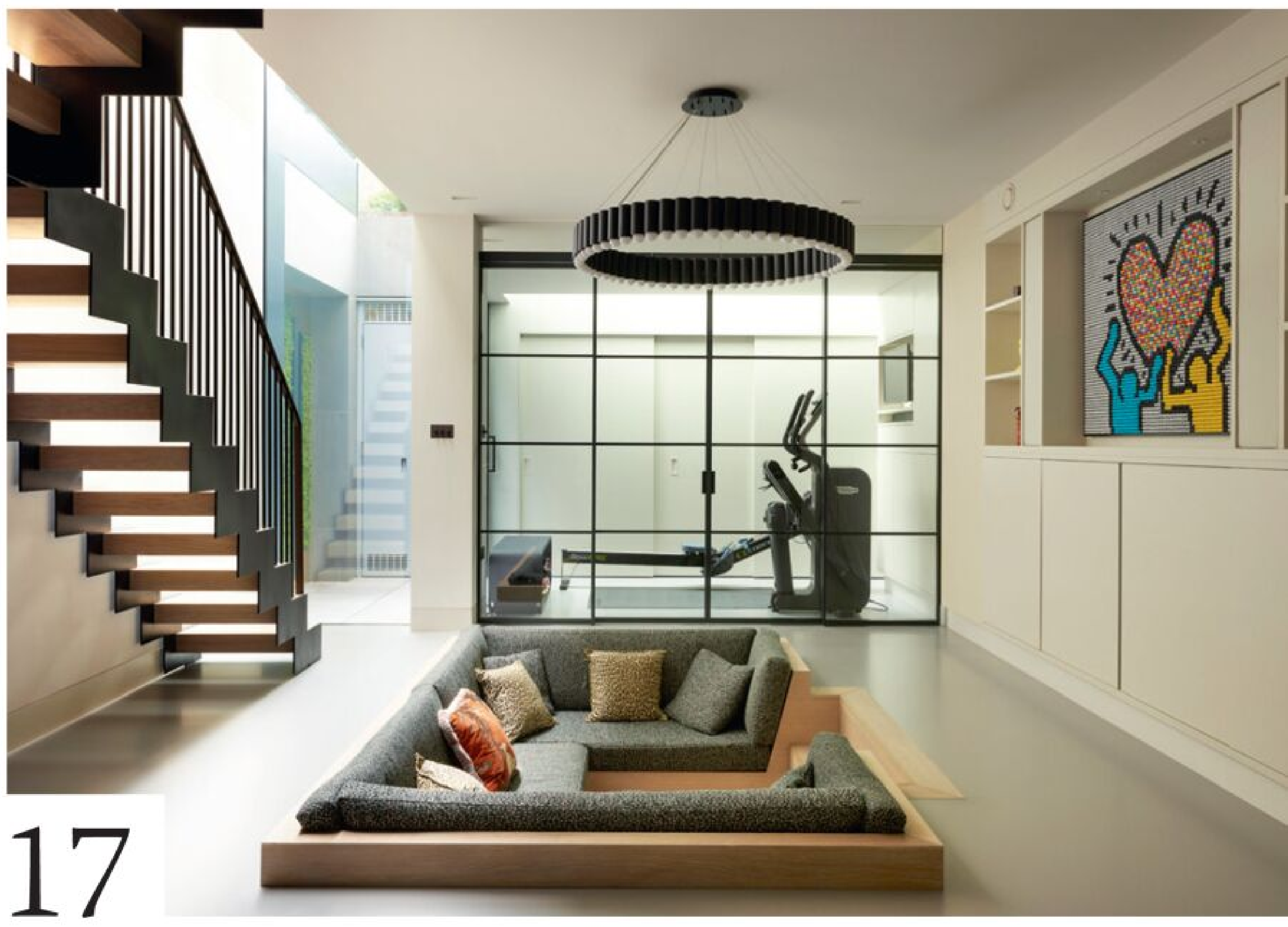
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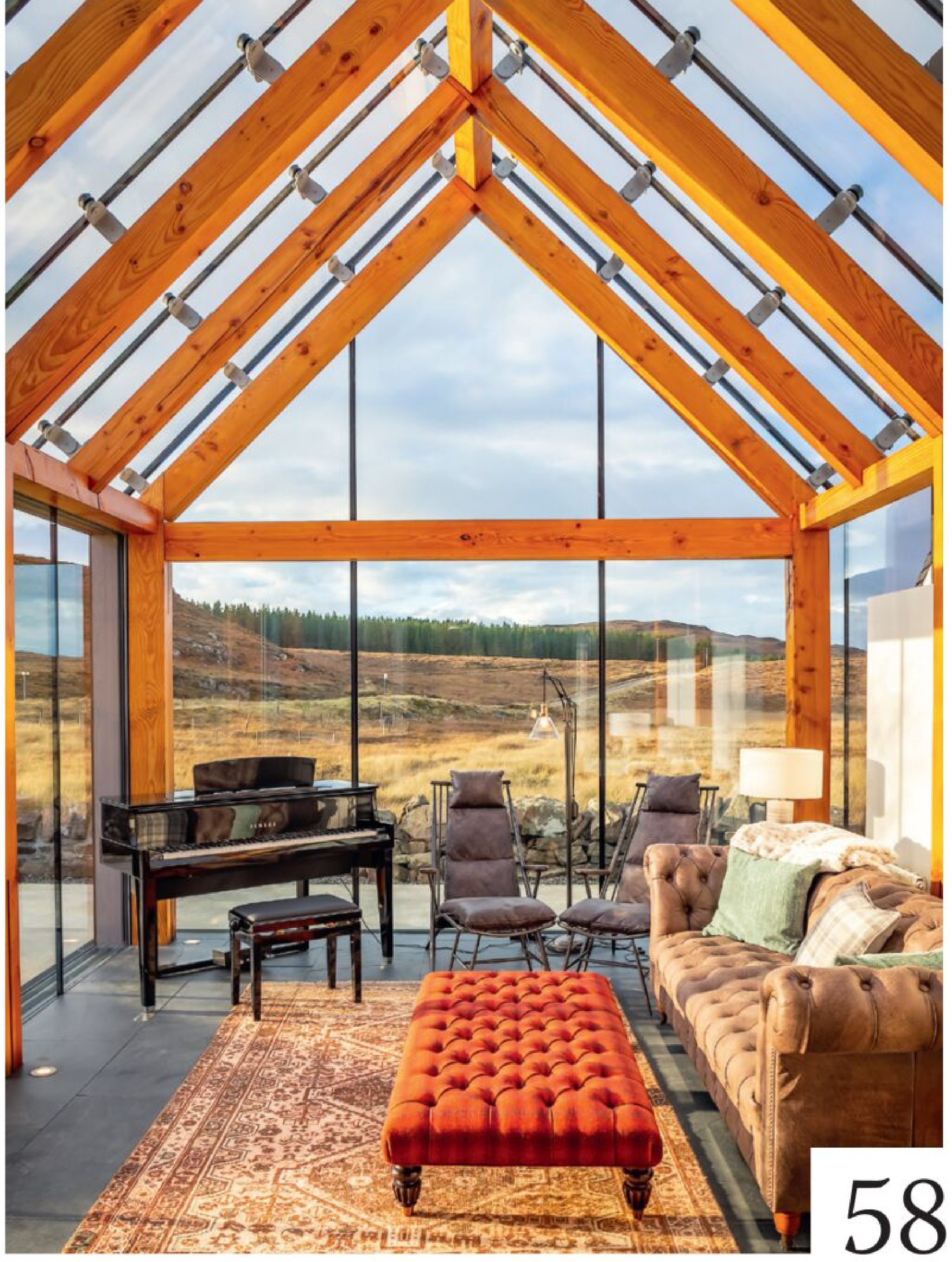

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Architect's view 130

Demian Erbar shares his expertise on how to create an effective upside-down layout while maintaining comfort and privacy

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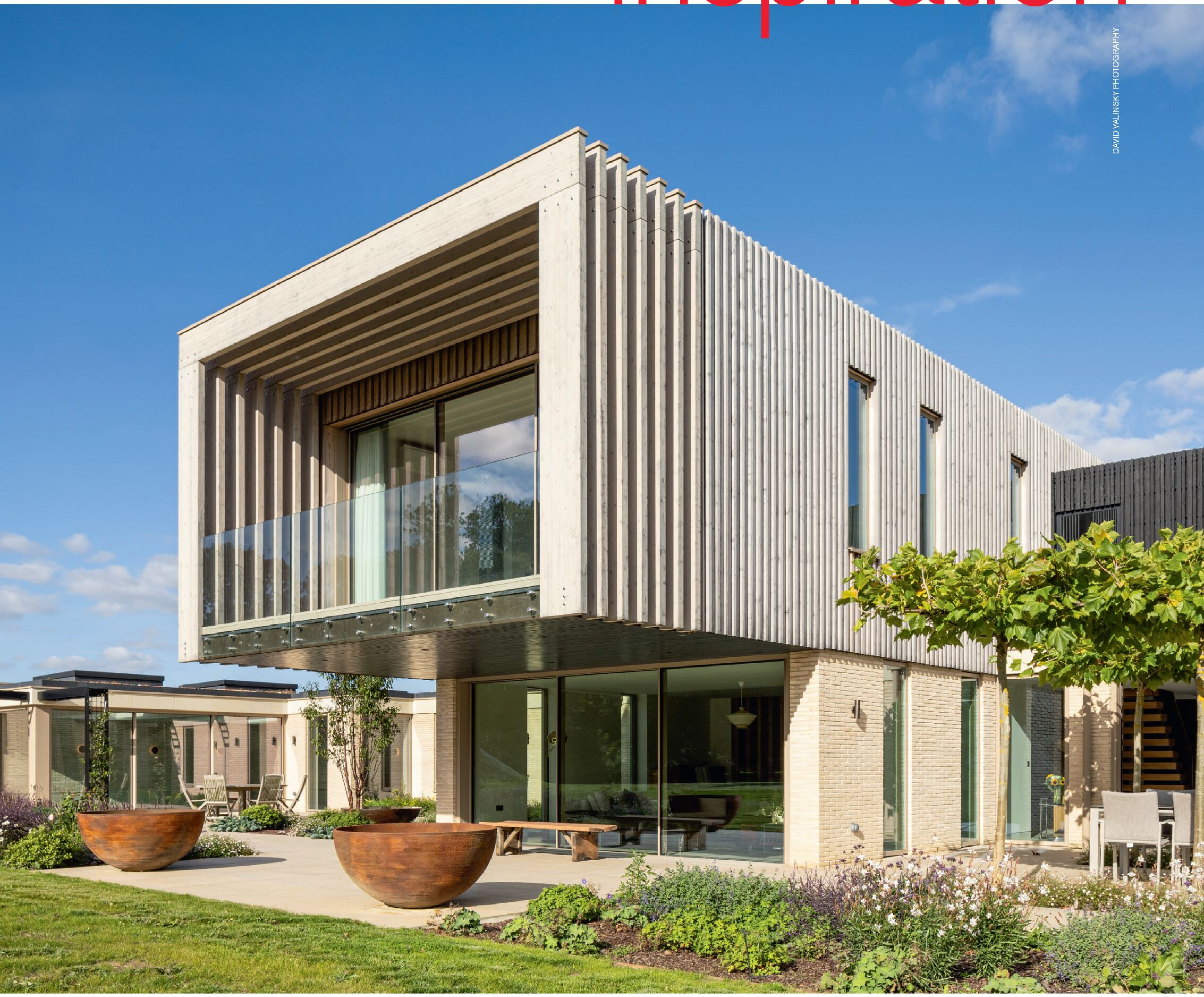

DAVID VALINSKY PHOTOGRAPHY

Stunning contemporary self build

This impressive home in rural Hertfordshire replaces a 1970s modernist house that had fallen into disrepair. The design, by Snell David Architects, draws inspiration from the original building, ensuring the new, contemporary property complements the surrounding landscape.

Each unique segment enjoys expansive countryside views and abundant natural light, made possible by the building's distinctive form and thoughtfully placed slim-line glazing. A muted palette of natural materials, such as light-coloured brick and larch timber, characterises both the external facade and the interior. Together, these elements help to cement the property in its rural context and create a bright, welcoming atmosphere internally.

On the first floor, the four branches of the interconnected plan host the bedrooms, arranged around a central landing. The master bedroom extends over the landscaped garden, creating a stunning focal point with a cantilevered balcony that frames views of a nearby lily pond and captures the evening light. Below, the ground floor features a double-height dining space, family kitchen and snug living room.

The main structure is formed from steel and timber frame. Air source heat pumps, which provide space heating, hot water and warm the swimming pool, are powered by electricity generated by a large solar PV bank on the roof. The flat areas of roofing are covered with a lush sedum and rainwater is harvested for garden irrigation.

For more information call 01223 830880 or visit snell-david.co.uk

PROJECT OF THE MONTH

The old Rectory

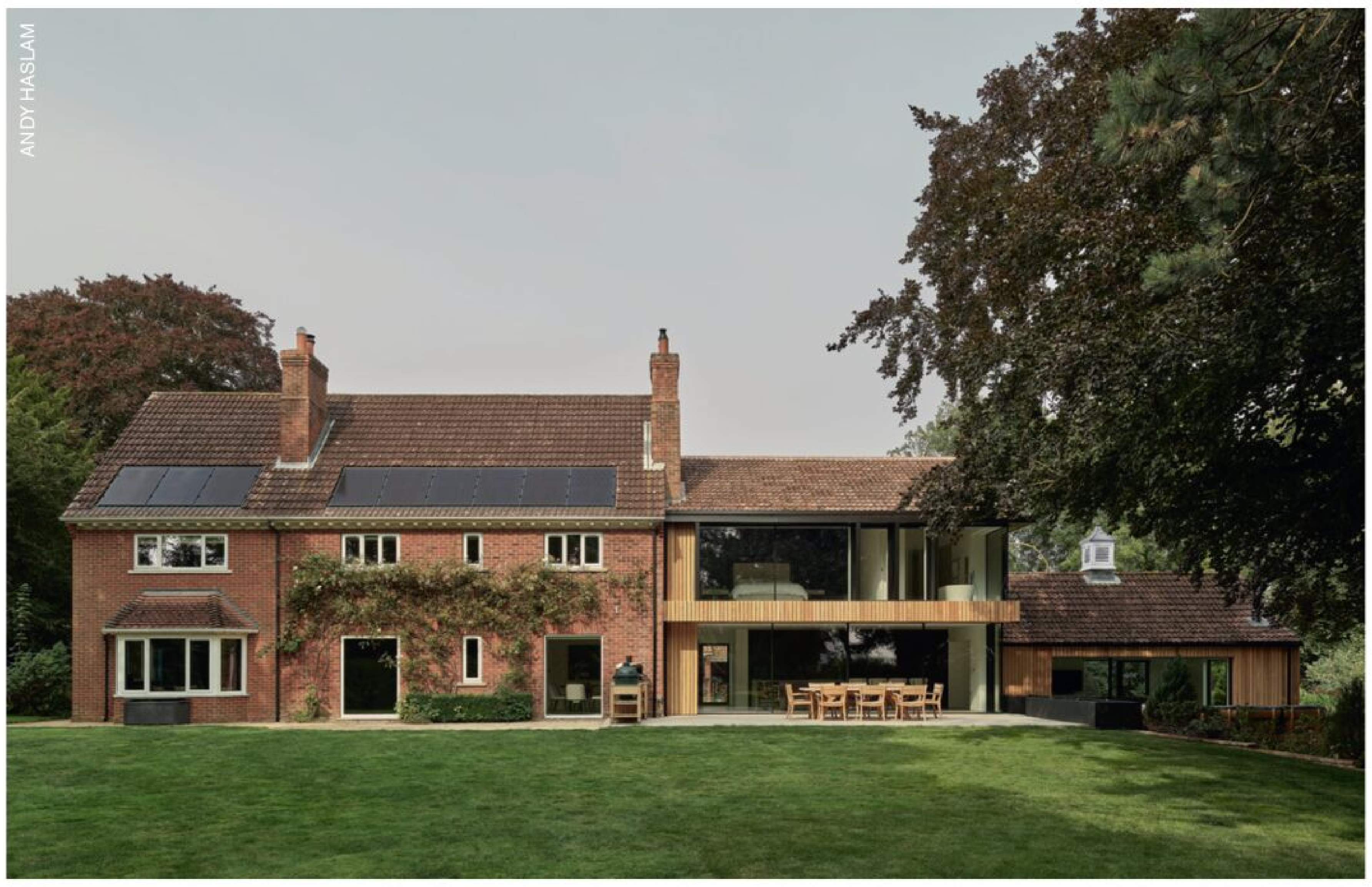
by ID Architecture

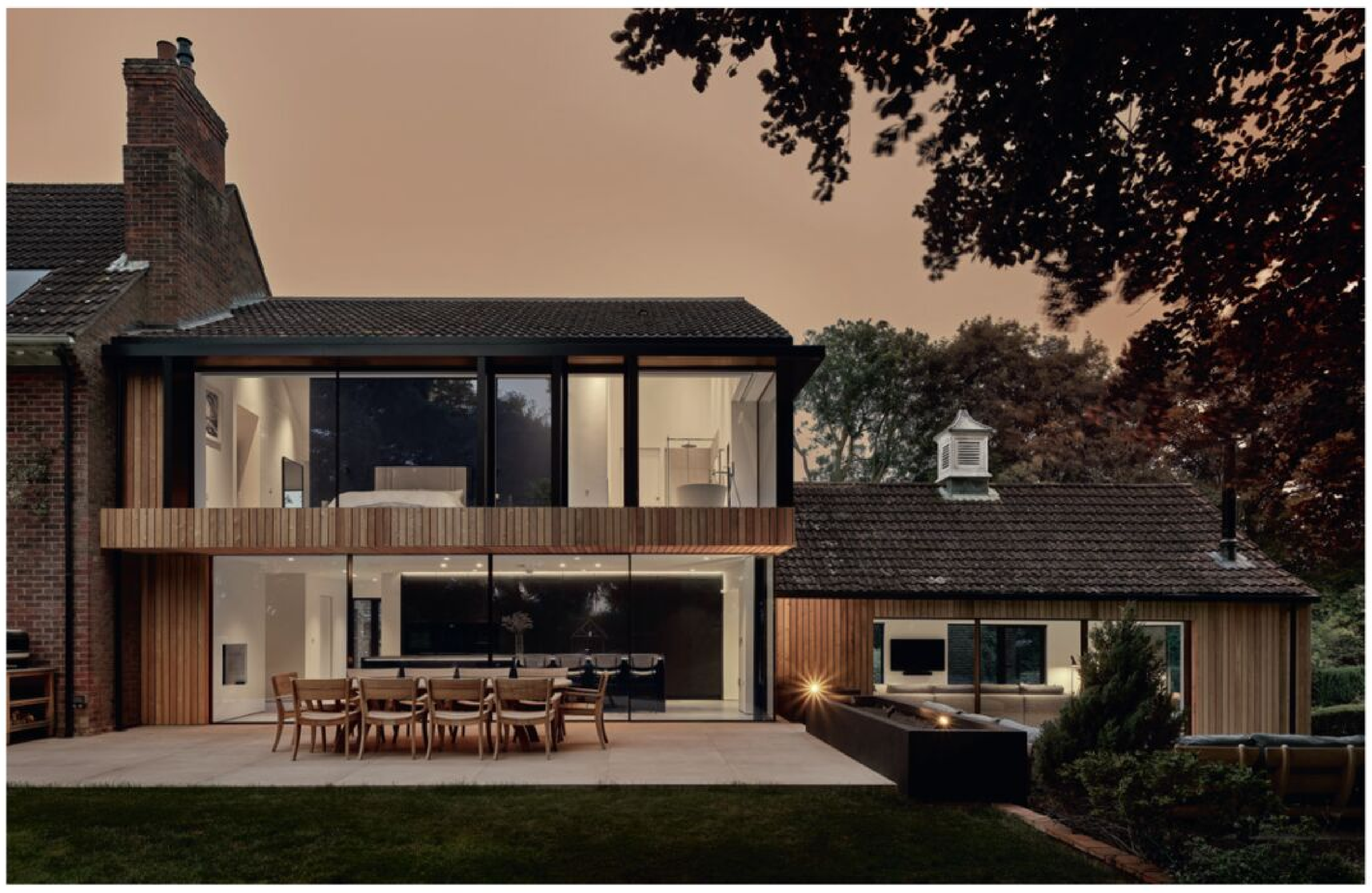
Nestled in the quiet village of South Kelsey near the Lincolnshire Wolds, this 19th-century home has been transformed by a contemporary two-storey extension that harmonises with its historic roots. Set within eight acres of serene and secluded grounds, the property is framed by mature gardens and two ponds, creating a stunning retreat.

The new addition celebrates the surrounding landscape with an open-plan layout and expansive glazing, inviting panoramic views of the gardens. The design features vertical timber cladding, a deliberate contrast to the original building's classic red brick, sympathetically introducing contemporary character to the period property. An outdated PVCu conservatory was removed, allowing the kitchen to extend seamlessly into the garden, enhancing the indoor-outdoor connection.

Inside, the ground-floor living spaces open onto a patio shaded by mature beech trees, while the upper floor introduces a vaulted master suite that appears to float among the treetops. Cantilevered windows and passive solar shading contribute to a consistent and comfortable internal temperature, as well as providing privacy, while corner glazing in the ensuite bathroom adds a touch of luxury to the space.

For more information call 01472 211144 or visit idarchitecture.co.uk


ANDY HASLAM



Nationwide to offer green borrowing

The bank's new Green Additional Borrowing mortgage is aimed at helping homeowners to finance eco-friendly improvements with a 0% interest rate. The option is available for a fixed term of two or five years for existing Nationwide mortgage holders to access extra funds with no interest, for a range of energy-saving solutions. Boiler upgrades, solar panel installations, air source heat pumps, additional insulation, double glazing and electric car charging points are amongst the eligible improvements under the scheme.

4.75%

is the new interest rate set by the Bank of England, down from 5%, the lowest rate since June 2023. Lenders are swiftly following suit with reductions to mortgage rates, bringing confidence to buyers in a boost to the housing market. The Bank's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) did sound a note of caution that the government's Autumn Budget is likely to increase inflation in the short term. This suggests further rate drops are unlikely in the immediate future.

Alpha recommends updates to the BUS

Home heating specialist Alpha (alpha-innovation.co.uk) has called on the Labour government to introduce better support for homeowners looking to take steps in making their properties more sustainable. The Boiler Upgrade Scheme (BUS) offers money off the cost and installation of heat pumps and biomass boilers. Alpha have suggested that a grant amount of £2,500 should be added for hybrid systems, following research that 53% of UK billpayers would be likely to utilise the scheme if hybrids were included.

What's on?

NSBRC MARKET DAY	**13th DEC**	FREE, SWINDON	Take your questions to expert exhibitors at the NSBRC for valuable in-person advice	nsbrc.co.uk
DIY & HOME MAINTENANCE	**18th DEC**	£150, WEST BYFLEET	Develop your home maintenance, repair and renovation expertise at this hands-on workshop	eventbrite.co.uk
KITCHEN FITTING	**2nd-3rd JAN**	£275, CROYDON	Install your own kitchen to a professional standard with the help of expert instructors on this two-day course	thebtc.co.uk
DIY IN A DAY: PLUMBING	**5th JAN**	£210, LONDON	Gain the essential skills to safely and effectively carry out your own plumbing	thegoodlifecentre.co.uk
GUIDE TO SELF BUILD PROJECTS	**10th-12th JAN**	£395, SWINDON	Discover what you need to know to set yourself up for a successful self build project	nsbrc.co.uk
INTRODUCTION TO GARDENING	**12th JAN**	£85, LONDON	Whatever the size of your outdoor space, find out how to create an eco-conscious garden	walworthgarden.org.uk

Stamp duty additional home rate rises, hitting self builders

The higher rate of stamp duty for those buying a second home in England or Northern Ireland has increased to an additional 5% on top of the standard tax, as set out by chancellor Rachel Reeves in the government's recent Autumn Budget. The updated rate came into effect 31st October, increasing from 3% previously. It's possible to claim a refund on the higher rate if you sell your previous home within 12 months of completing or purchasing the new one, but the additional rate must still be paid in the first instance. For self builders hoping to live in an existing property while building a new home, this presents a cash flow issue that must be accommodated in the project budget – with the 2% uplift reflecting a significant increase on the amount of money locked up until a refund can be claimed.

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need to know

The rise of timber frame construction

The popularity of timber frame construction is booming in the UK as more individuals opt to prioritise sustainable, energy-efficient homes. It's now the fastest-growing building method in the country. Estimates suggest that a total of around 13,000 homes were built in 2023 in the self and custom build sector. The percentage of those in the UK built using timber frame systems, is in the region of over 50%. As always, while the mainstream housebuilders strive to achieve zero carbon, it will be the self builders driving the increase in sustainable construction and really showing them how it's done.

Indeed, sustainability is a key driver for timber frame's popularity. As buildings contribute 14% of the UK's total greenhouse emissions, timber, with its lower embodied carbon and renewable sourcing, presents a responsible choice. Most homeowners find that timber frame properties not only lower environmental impact but also reduce long-term energy costs – a growing priority as energy prices continue to rise.

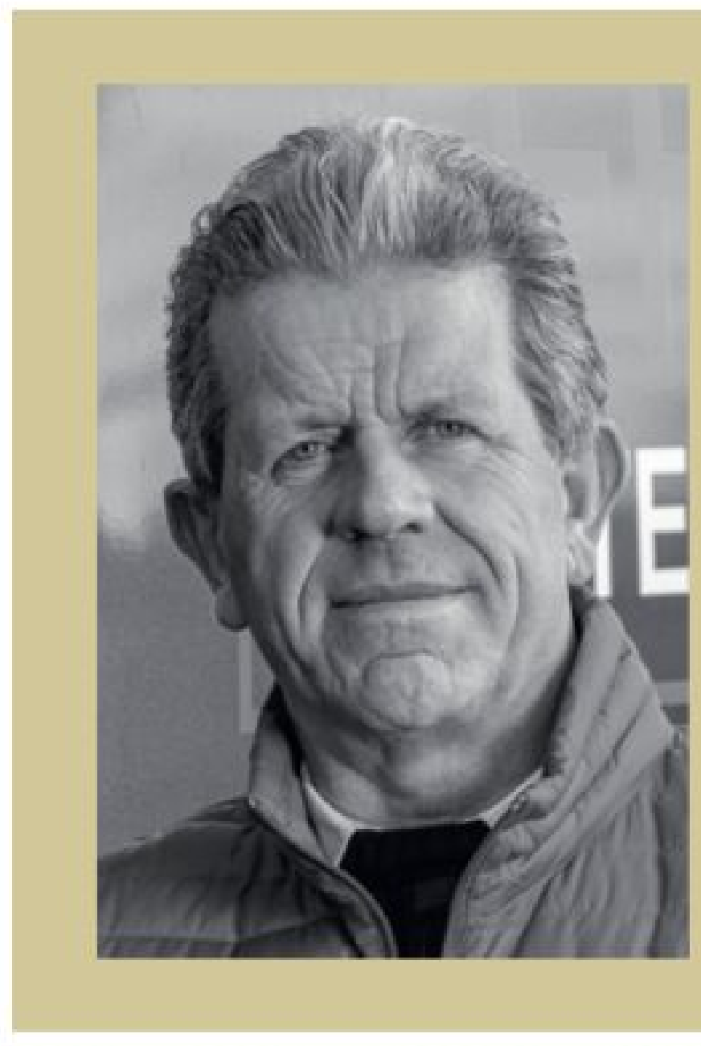
Timber construction also offers flexibility and customisation, making it ideal for self builders. Modern timber frame solutions support a range of innovative cladding options, which allow designs to be adapted to various plot types, budgets and aesthetic goals. The flexibility of timber frame allows self builders to design precisely to their specifications.

Another significant benefit is the speed and predictability of timber construction. Prefabricated offsite, timber frames are manufactured in controlled environments, leading to reduced on site build times and minimised weather delays. This can save self builders valuable time and money, while ensuring quality control and reducing material waste.

Timber frame buildings also allow for greater reign over insulation, enabling homeowners to integrate natural or breathable insulation materials, which is more difficult with other construction methods. This flexibility improves thermal performance and comfort, further reducing energy costs.

The Structural Timber Association (STA) supports the growth of timber frame construction by providing resources, quality standards, and access to expert partners. Its STA Assure certification, for example, guarantees that members have undergone quality audits and adhere to industry best practices. Choosing a reliable partner is the first step toward a successful self build project and no matter which STA-accredited company you choose, you'll be in safe hands.

Members can offer valuable advice on design, Building Regulations and planning challenges, ensuring the project meets all standards while optimising for sustainability. This value-engineered approach provides an all-encompassing solution that combines environmental responsibility with quality and cost-efficiency, positioning timber frame as a leading choice in modern homebuilding.



SIMON ORRELLS is managing director at STA-assured timber frame company, Frame Technologies. He has over three decades' experience in self build timber frame construction. Frame Technologies offers a flexible range of services to cover full supply and erect or supply only packages. For more information visit **frametechnologies.co.uk** and **sta.co.uk**

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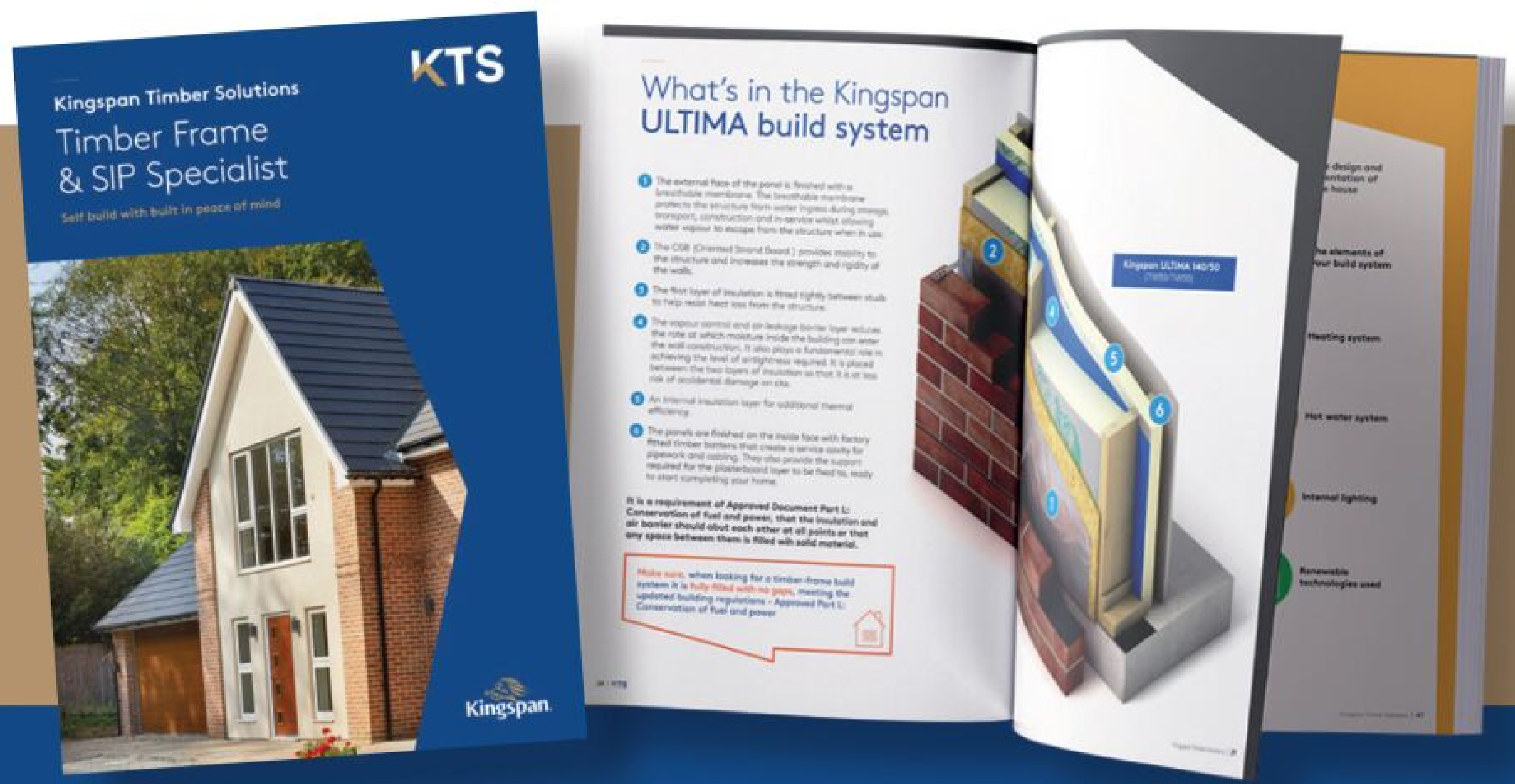
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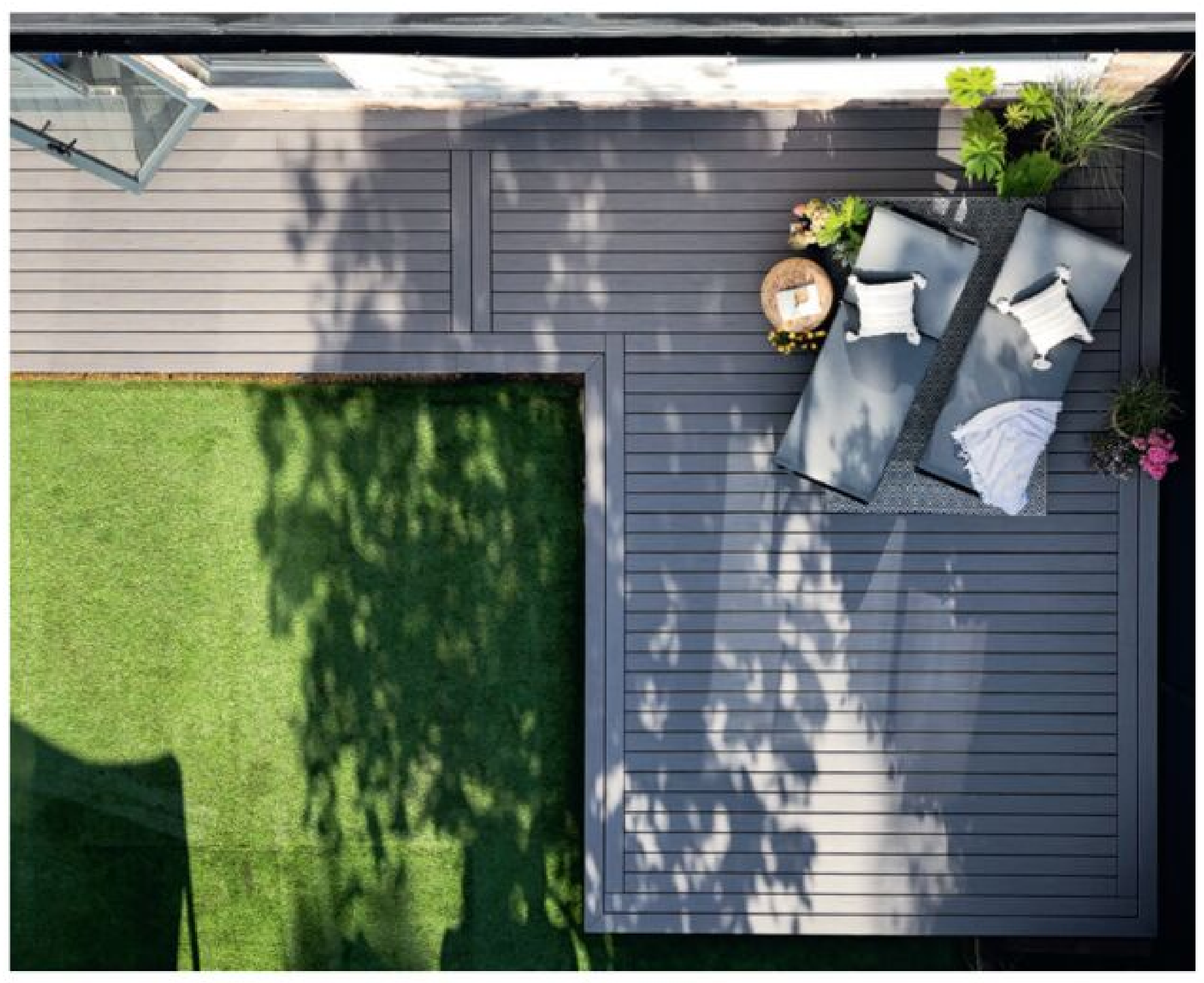
Manufactured with a waterproof layer for a long-lasting finish, this low-maintenance wood-effect flooring option provides the timeless look of hardwood, with a great selection of shades and styles to suit your home. Brecon Balance oak, £50 per m², woodpeckerflooring.co.uk

product news

Great shopping ideas for your custom home project



DURABLE DECKING ↑

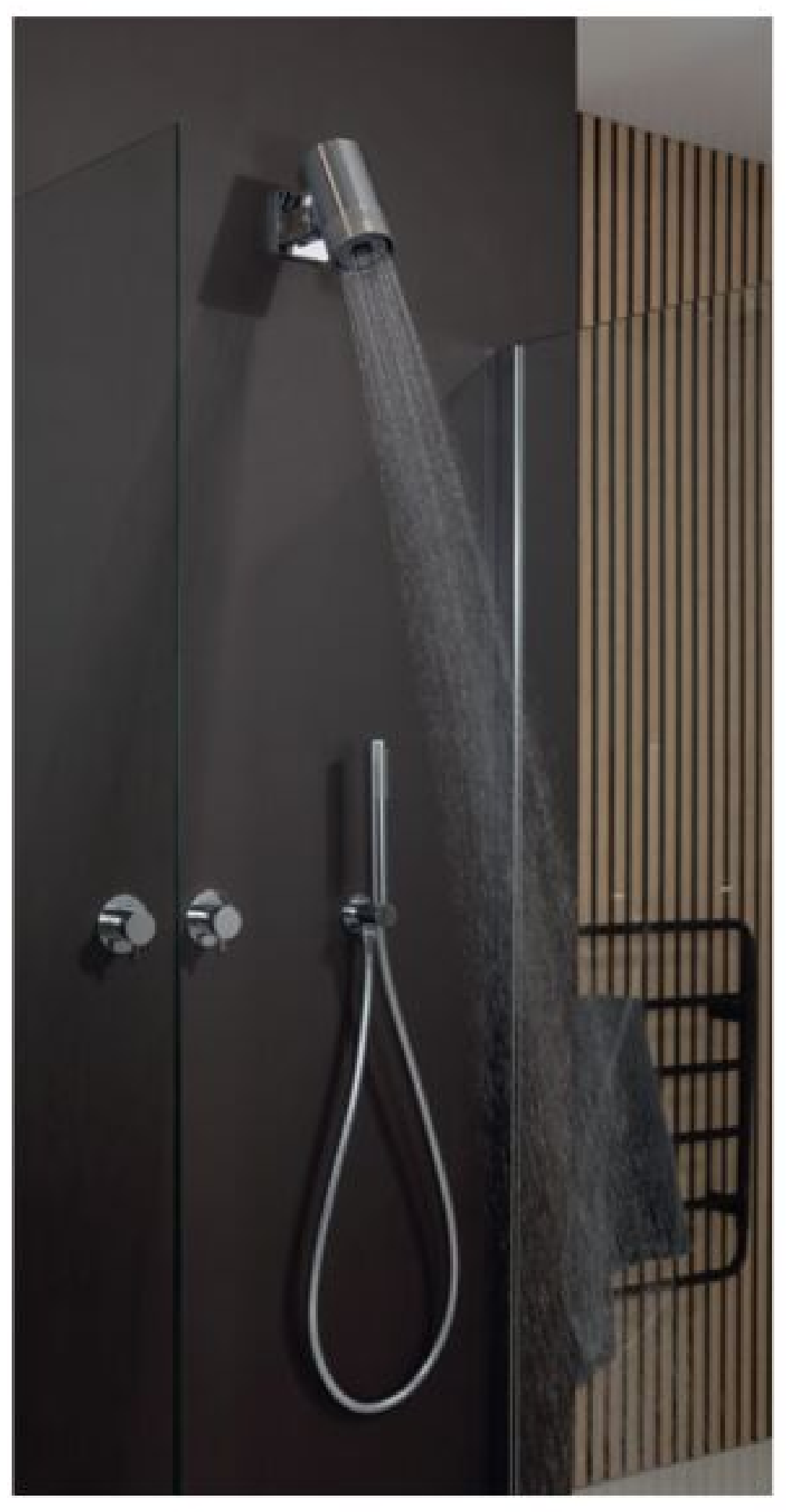
Trex's composite decking is designed to prevent rot, warping and splinters for a long-lasting outdoor surface that expertly replicates the look of natural wood. **Trex signature in whidbey, from £230 per m², trex.com**

SLEEK WINDOW BOX ↑

This glazed feature is ideal for creating an impressive focal point in your home and maximising access to natural light throughout your space. **Oriel window, from £2,400 per m², iqglassuk.com**

DISCREET SHOWER DESIGN →

With a concealed system and a sleek, minimalist appearance, this stylish shower setup allows for easy cleaning and bathroom upkeep. **Lumen shower head in chrome, £355, jtpuk.co.uk**



CUSTOMISABLE HEATING ↓

This smart electric radiator comes with integrated Wi-Fi and Bluetooth for quick remote temperature control. It has a paintable front that can be finished in your chosen shade. **Beha raw, from £275, scandinaviantrading.co.uk**

3 of the best BOILING WATER TAPS

1 *Front in gunmetal,* **from £1,590, quooker.co.uk**

2 *Fosso 4-in-1 tap in copper,* **£1,485, caple.co.uk**

3 *Pro Flex 3-in-1 in matte black,* **£999, wodar.com**

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interiors notebook

Enhance your home's interior scheme with complementary shades of warm berry red

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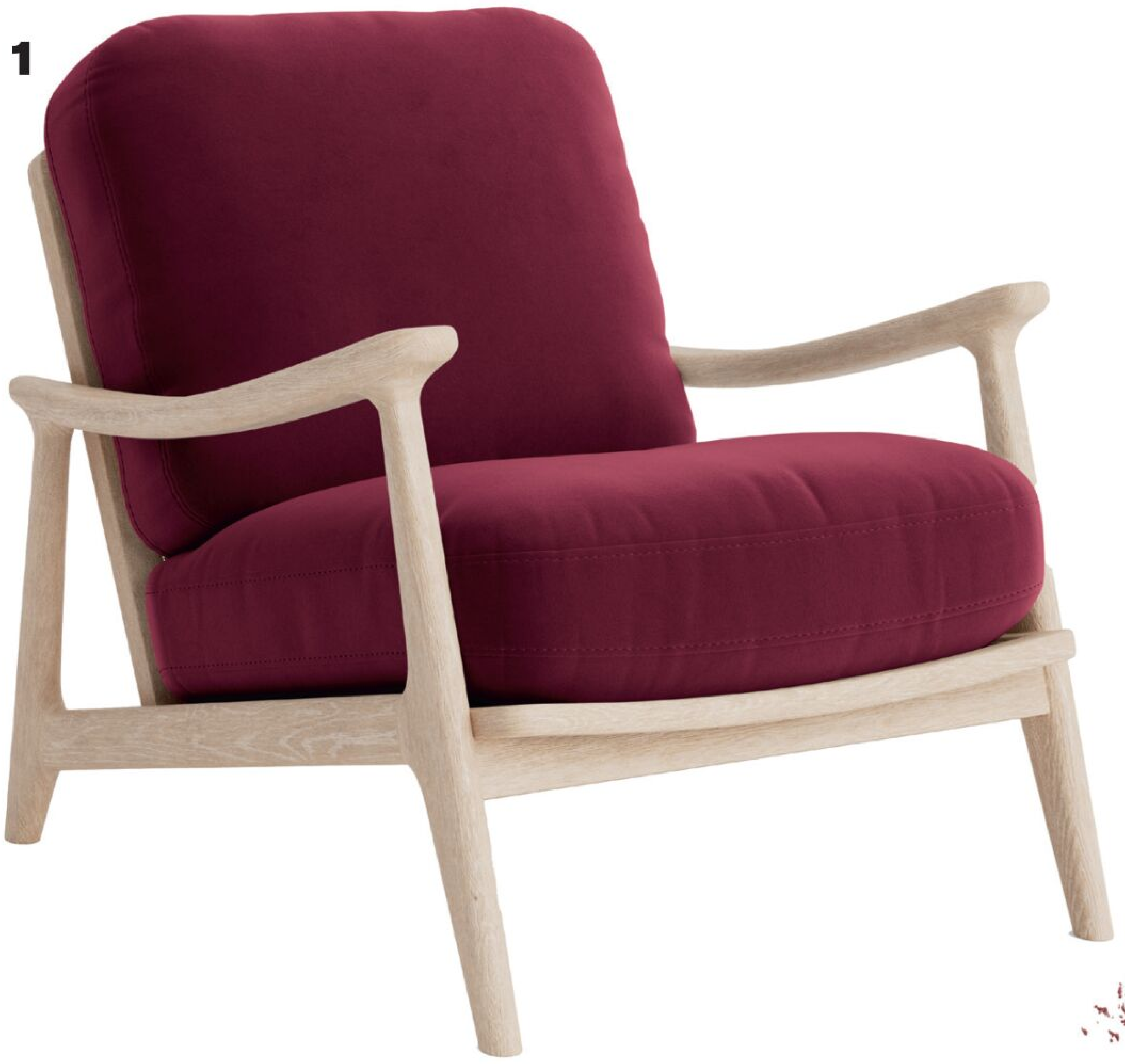

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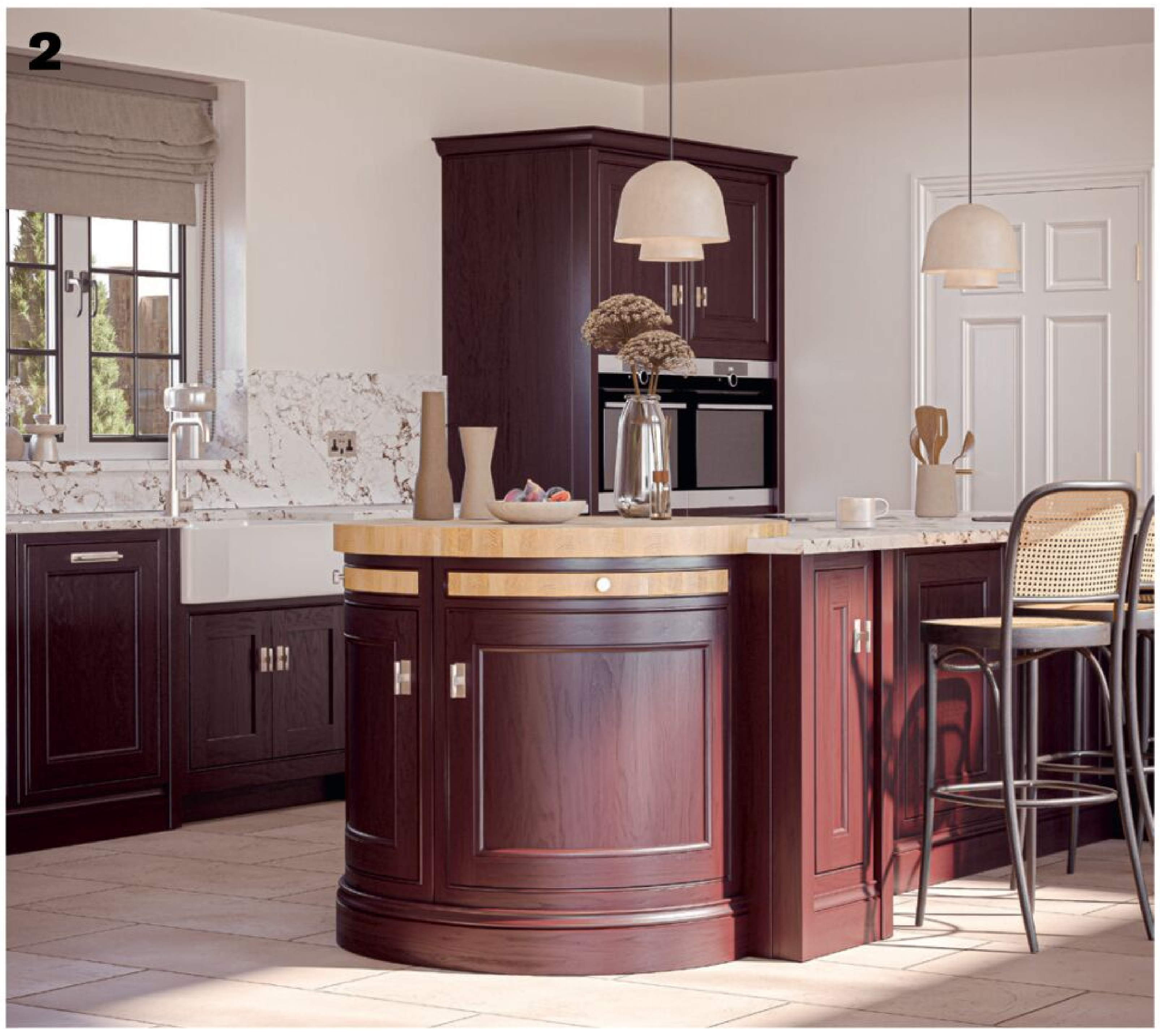

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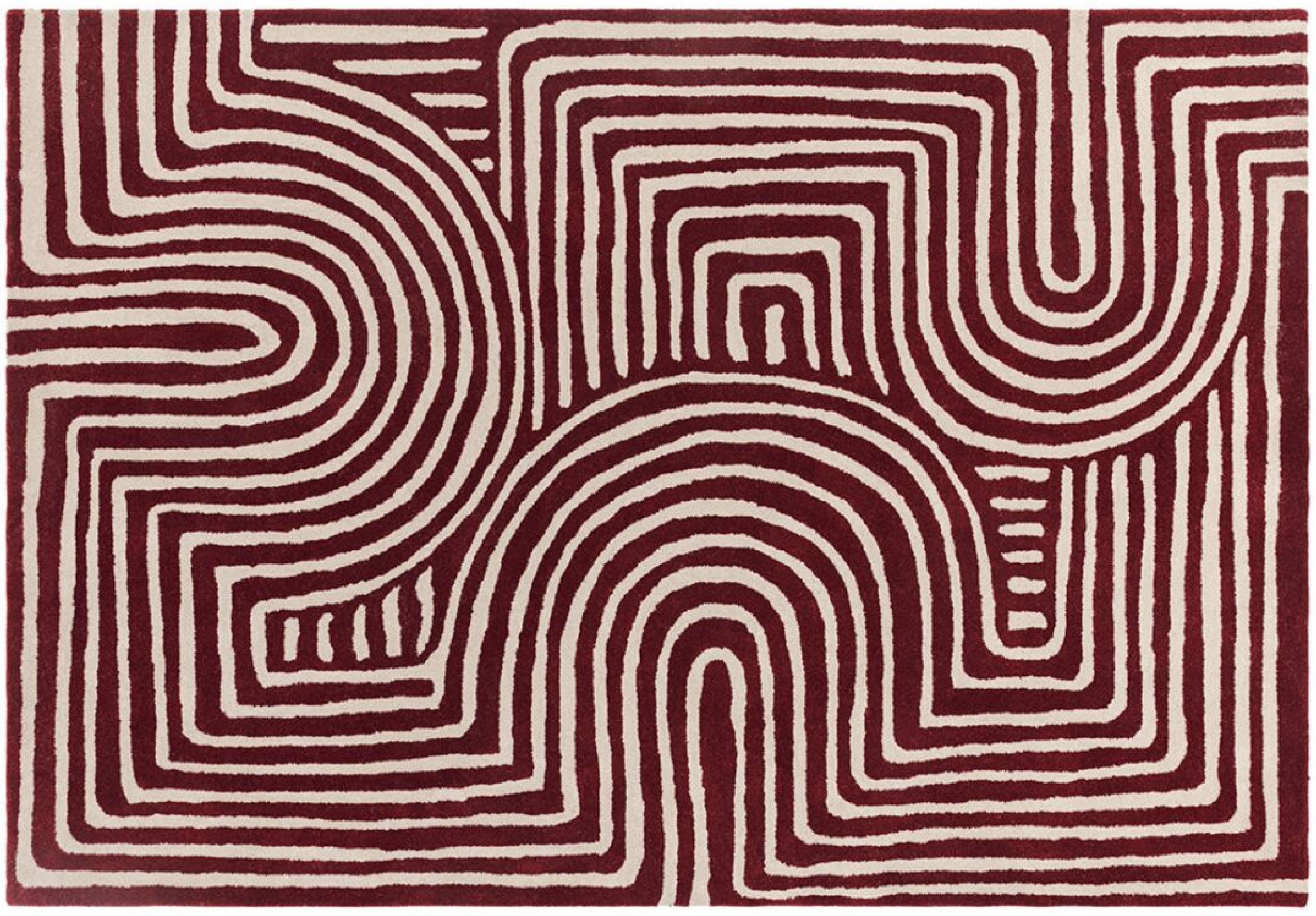

Shopping list

1 *Providing a soft pop of colour in your chosen space, this classic accent chair is the perfect spot to relax and unwind.* **Squishbag accent chair in drenched damsons, from £1,195, loaf.com**

2 *This timeless Shaker kitchen design in a rich berry hue features a distinctive woodgrain finish.* **Second Nature Clarendon Beaded kitchen in malbec, from £15,000, sn collection.co.uk**

3 *This vibrant wall paint is ideal for creating an inviting backdrop, adding depth and character to your home's design.* **Claypaint in lady bug, £57.50 for 2.5L, earthborn paints.co.uk**

4 *Hand-tufted from high-quality wool for a soft feel underfoot, this functional and funky stand-out rug with earthy tones is sure to make a statement.* **Bauhaus Wave rug in plum, £199, cultfurniture.com**

5 *For an elegant, glossy finish, opt for these Art Deco-inspired low-maintenance ceramic wall tiles in your kitchen or bathroom.* **Metro plum wall tiles, £17.95 per m², tilemountain.co.uk**

Coleman Anderson Architects / Mikey Reed Photography

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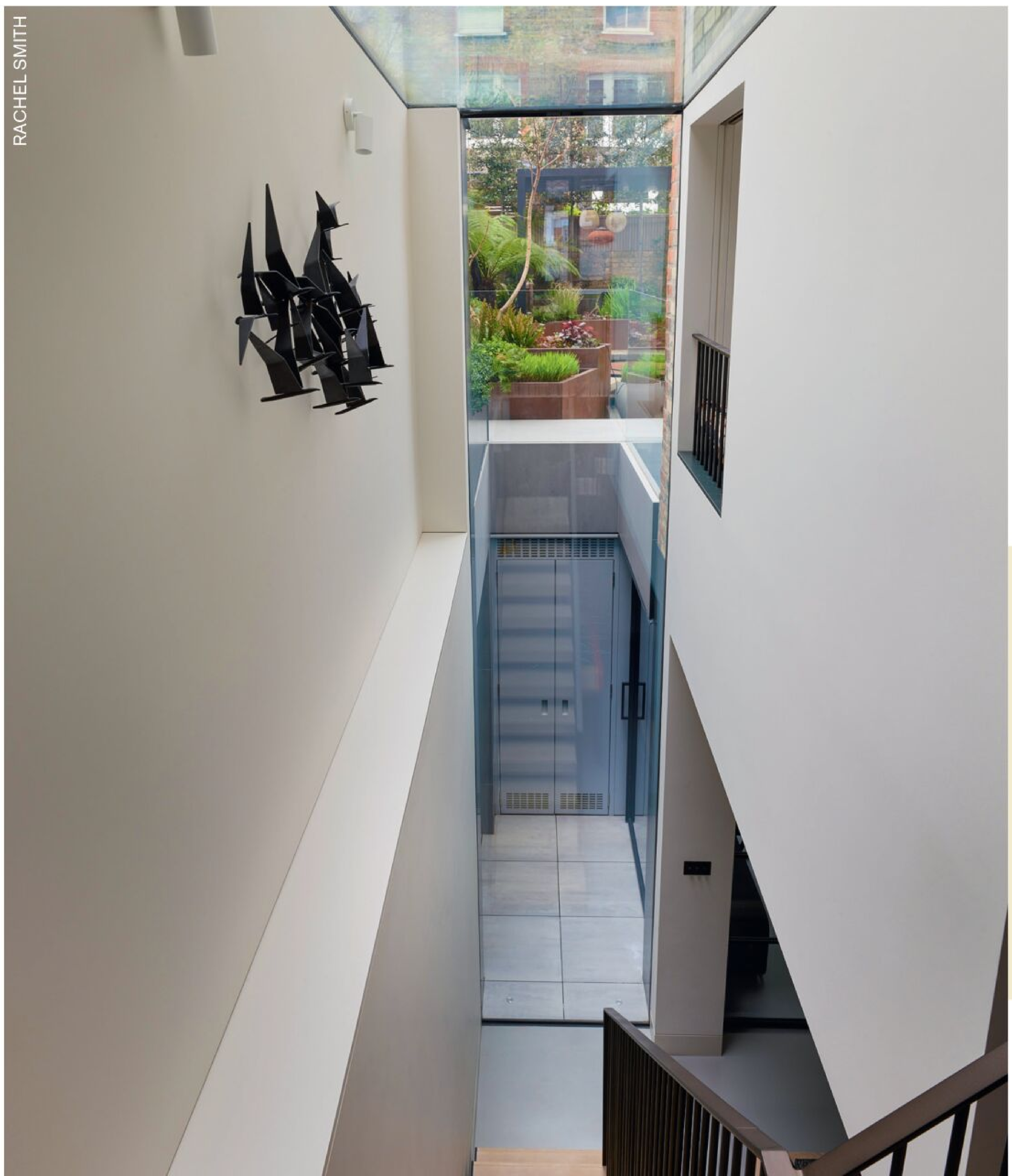
9 GREAT BASEMENT EXTENSION IDEAS



RACHEL SMITH

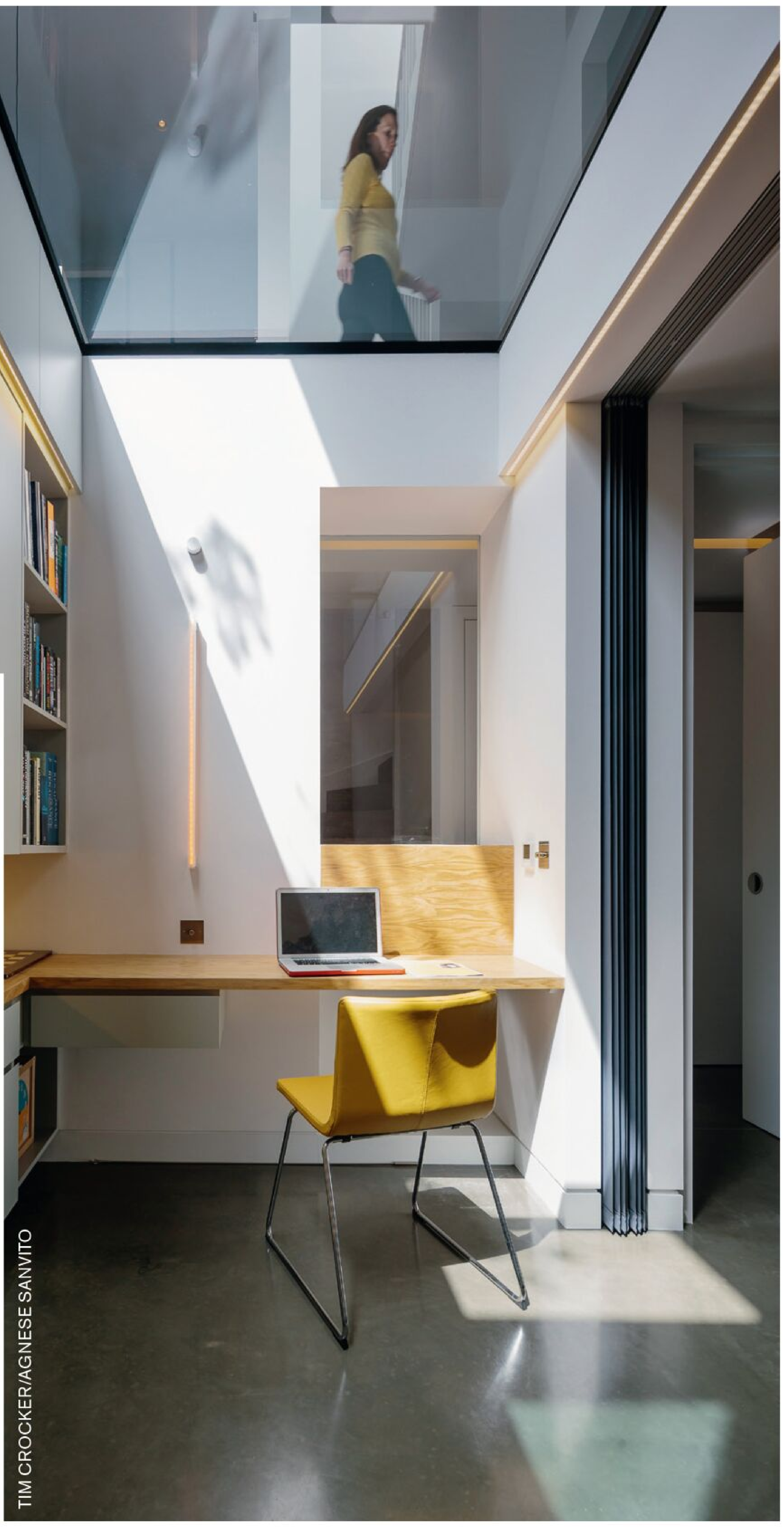
Digging down to create a new, multi-functional living space could be the best route to increasing the value and functionality of your home. Be inspired by Sander Tel's hand-picked collection of real-life basement projects

ROOM TO GROW

Paul Archer Design masterminded this family home renovation and extension, which involved excavating to create a spacious, bright and open subterranean living area and cinema room. A striking glass infill connects the ground floor to the basement zone, establishing a double-height void over a new staircase leading from the kitchen, dining and living room, down to the new space. **(www.paularcherdesign.co.uk)**

LET THERE BE LIGHT

Neil Dusheiko Architects remodelled this two-storey Victorian house in Hammersmith, London, to include a new basement and rear extension. The spacious lower storey is illuminated via large walk-on glazed rooflights and lightwells, which form part of the living space above and funnel light into the subterranean zone via the courtyard. The new basement holds an open-plan office/entertaining space for the entire family, with modern polished concrete floors and integrated storage features. **(www.neildusheiko.com)**



TIM CROCKER/AGNESE SANVITO

2PM ARCHITECTS

DOWN TO EARTH

This family home in St John's Wood, London, has been opened up with a basement extension stretching the house's entire footprint and out into the rear garden. Designed by 2pm Architects, the space features a double-height glazed void and bespoke staircase with a glass balustrade. This ensures an uninterrupted connection between the two storeys, while allowing plenty of natural light to filter down into the space throughout the day. **(www.2pm-architects.co.uk)**

EXPERT VIEW HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF YOUR BASEMENT SPACE

LIAM DOWER, director of St Albans Basement, shares how to effectively maximise your new subterranean zone

Think about how you want to use the space as basements can be quite versatile. The zone's function will depend on the client and their needs – we'll take time at the very start of the project, when we are working out whether a basement extension is viable, to fully understand the client's brief and what their key requirements are. Most people looking to extend downwards are usually after a separate entertainment area, perhaps an office or study and an extra guest bedroom with an ensuite. Popular additions include a gym, wine storage, media rooms and a swimming pool/leisure/spa facilities, if the site conditions and budget allow.

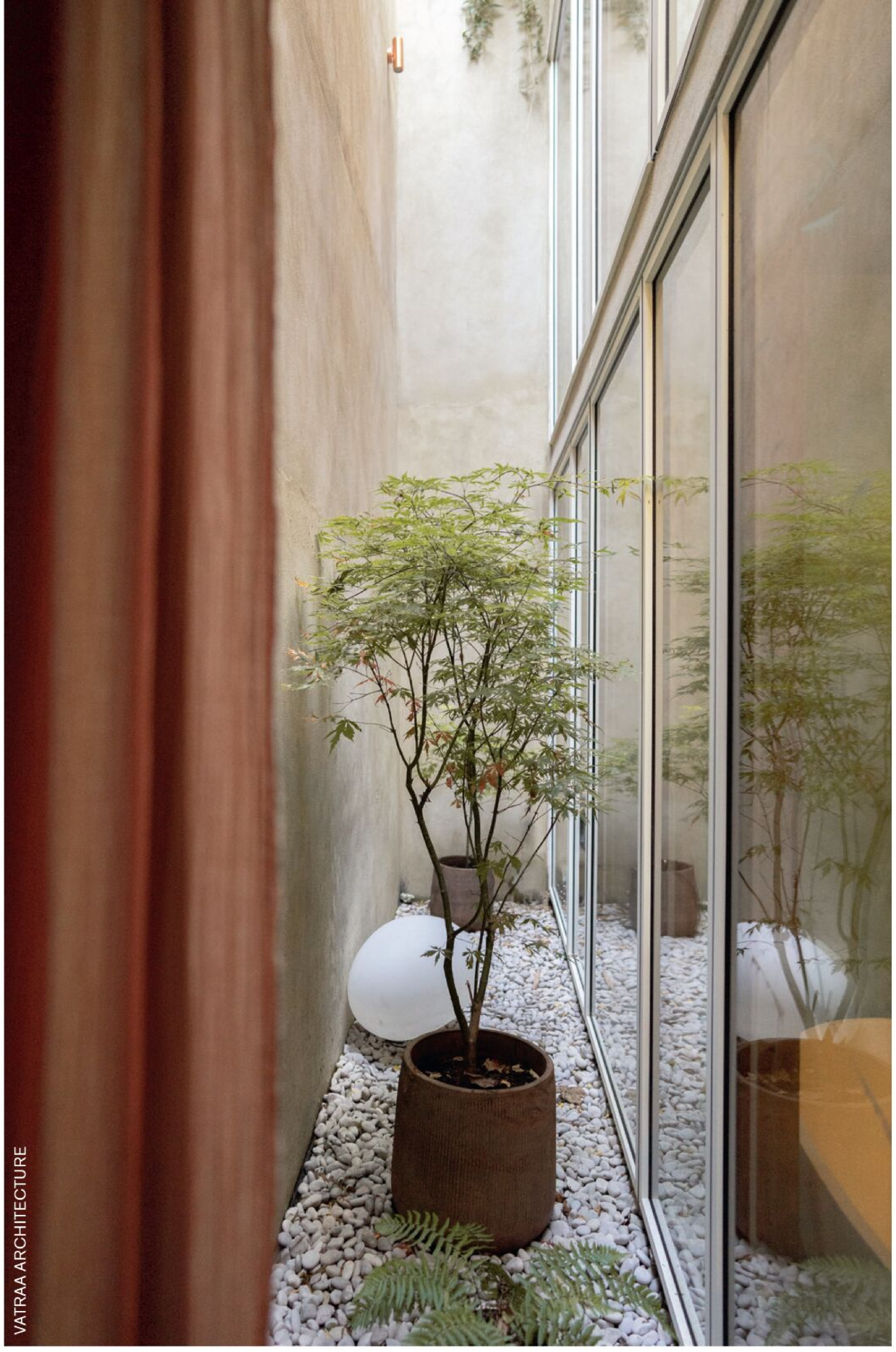
Connecting the new space with the rest of the house is really important in ensuring a harmonious, functional floorplan. This is usually achieved via a centrally-located staircase either in the house or via a purpose-built link connecting the main property and, say, a basement garden. The way that this connection is achieved is unique to each basement project and the position of the stairs is initially chosen to maximise square footage inside, whilst also creating a seamless flow between storeys.

Getting natural light underground is one of the most important considerations of any subterranean project. To bring daylight into the basement, we often construct lightwells, which allow either windows or doors to be inserted. Depending on the garden space, large bifold, sliding or French-style doors might open onto a lightwell or even sunken courtyard zone, lessening the feeling of being underground and increasing the space's access to natural ventilation. We often find that, where there is no room for a lightwell, we can still install high-level windows if a side alley permits, therefore exposing the light-locked rooms at the centre of the floorplan (typically bathrooms) to natural light. Glazed fanlights over any internal doors are another smart technique to provide the stairwell with natural light while connecting with the upper floors.

Planning artificial lighting and incorporating a layered scheme will help bring different moods and atmospheres to any basement. Careful lighting design can also help to break the space into zones without physically dividing the room. Many of our clients opt for a passive infrared sensor lighting system, especially in bathrooms, as these are zones are normally positioned in darker areas of the basement.

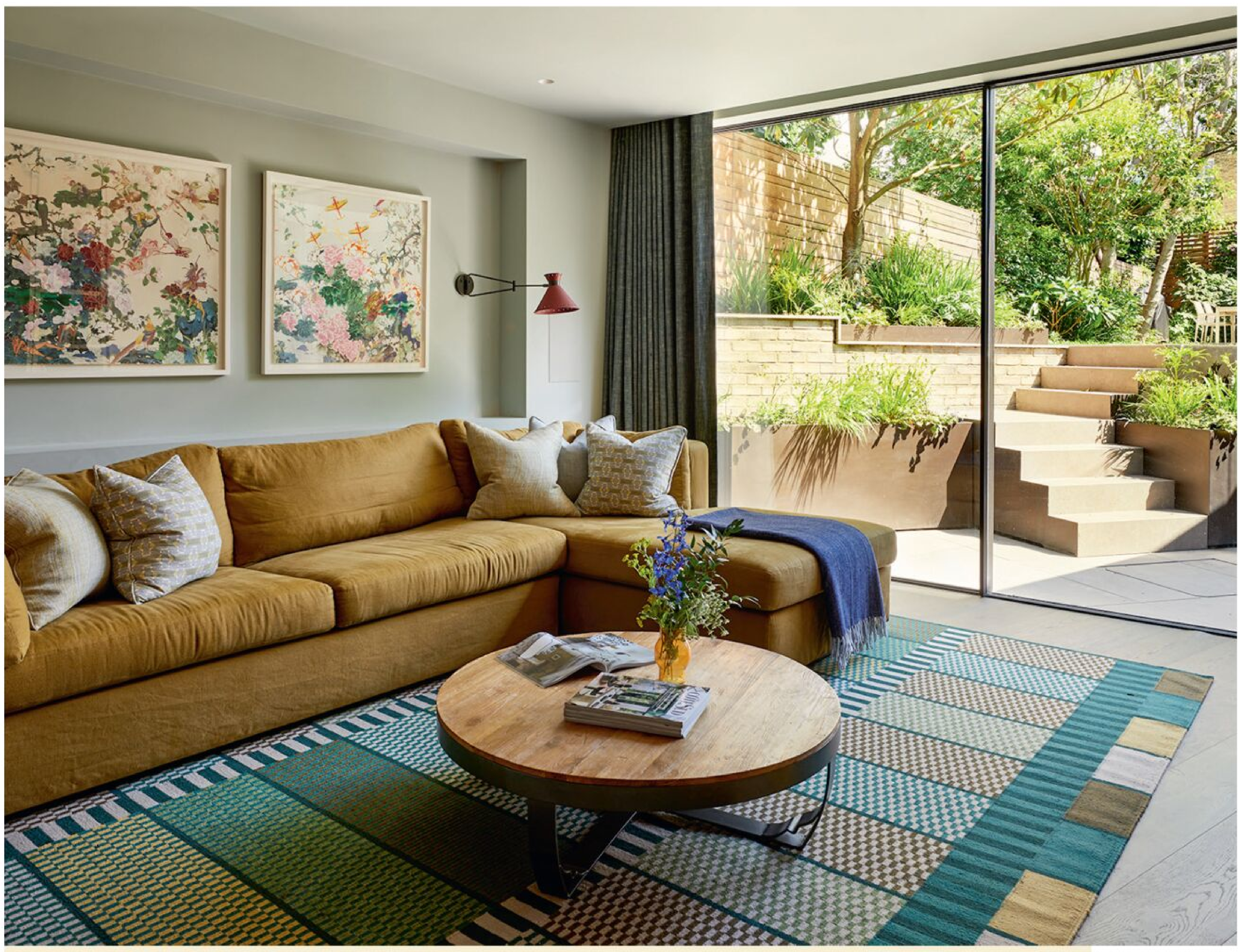
DOUBLE UP

This family enlisted Vatraa Architecture to help them transform a former artist studio into a bright, open and energy-efficient forever home. By extending four metres below ground and reconfiguring the internal areas, the floorplan has been more than doubled, gaining another 77m^2 in addition to the original 60m^2 studio. A six-metre deep lightwell illuminates the lowered ground floor and new basement level below, while the natural light captured through the glazed roof is guided internally (via a stairwell and through openings in slabs) all the way down to the subterranean floor. Alongside this, enhanced insulation, an air source heat pump and an MVHR system have been installed to help reduce energy usage. **(www.vatraa.com)**



VATRAA ARCHITECTURE

DARREN CHEUNG



BRIGHT IDEA

Gregory Phillips Architects designed a rear addition, which required a full basement excavation, as part of this Victorian house renovation in London. The new subterranean space holds an open-plan living zone and has a strong connection with the garden, which is accessed via full-height glazed sliding doors. **(www.gregoryphillips.com)**

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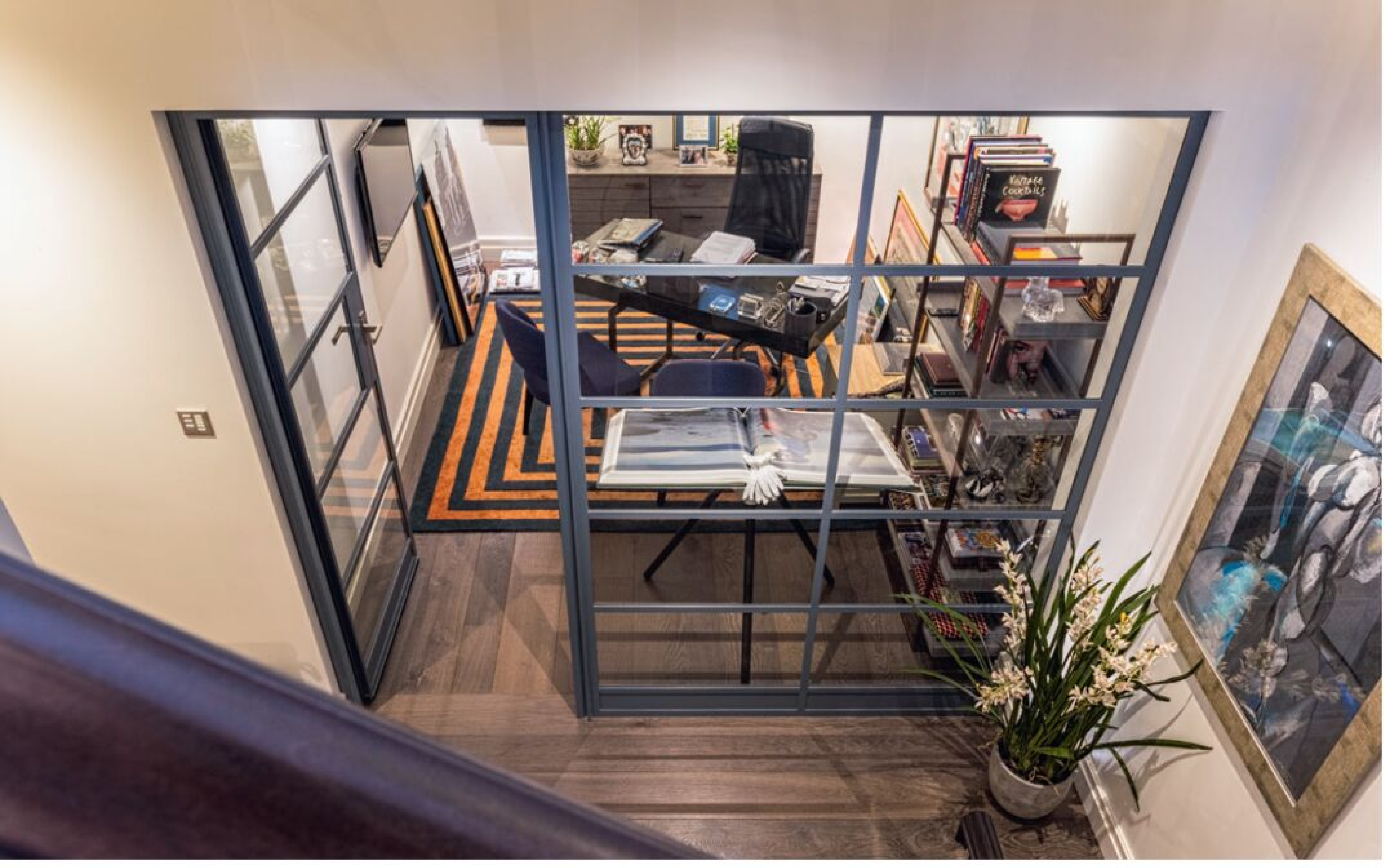
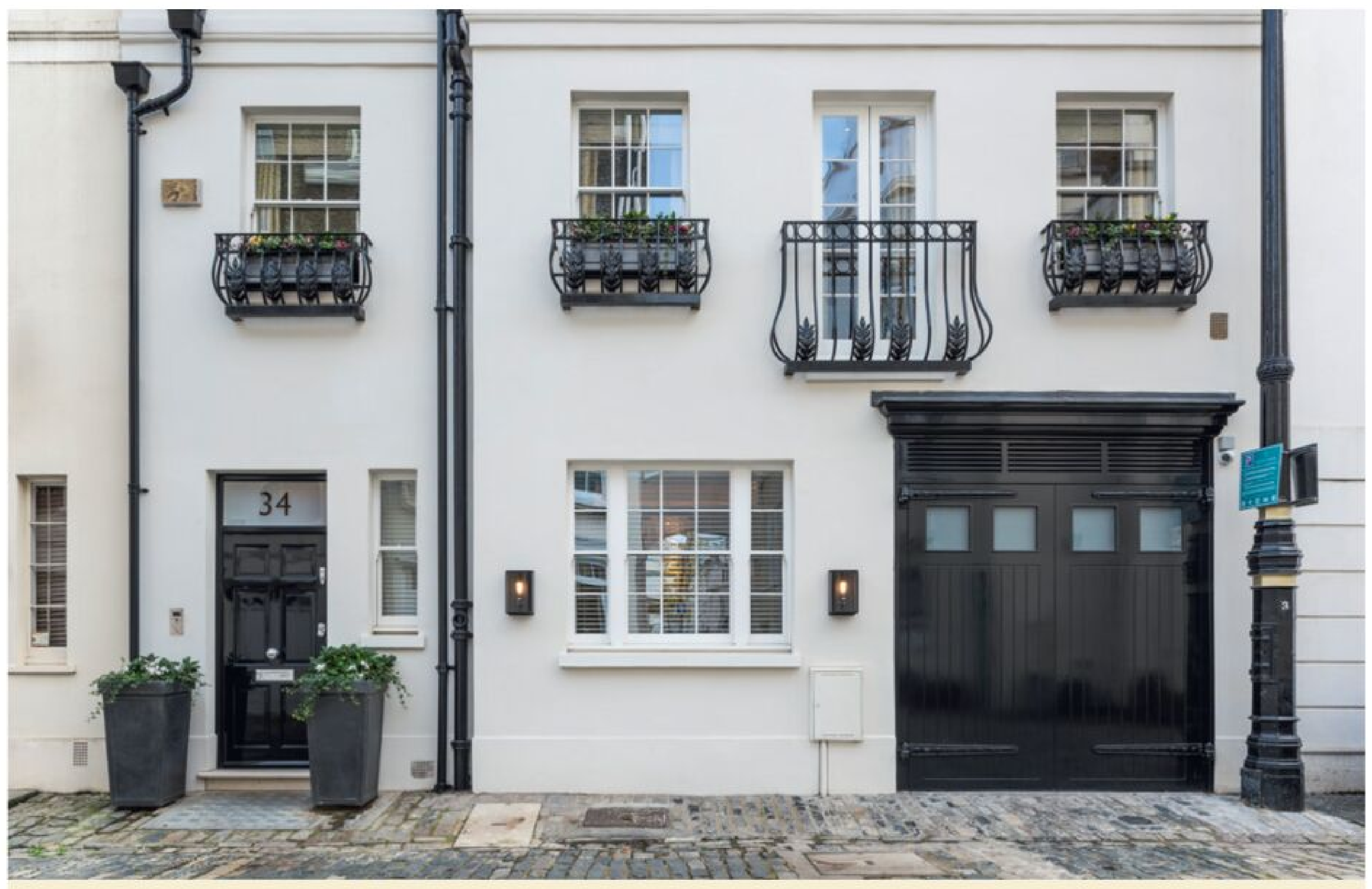
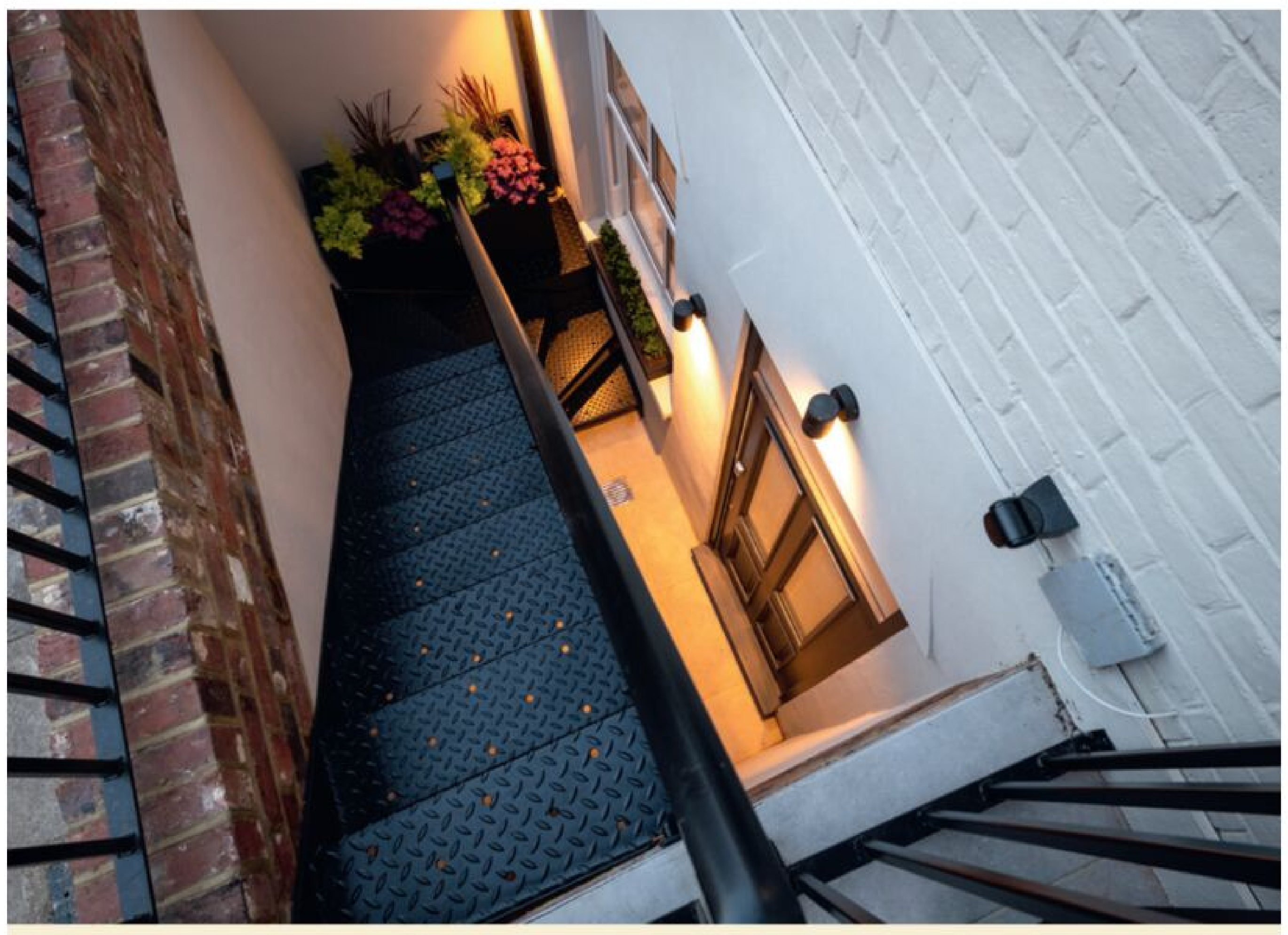




HIDDEN POTENTIAL

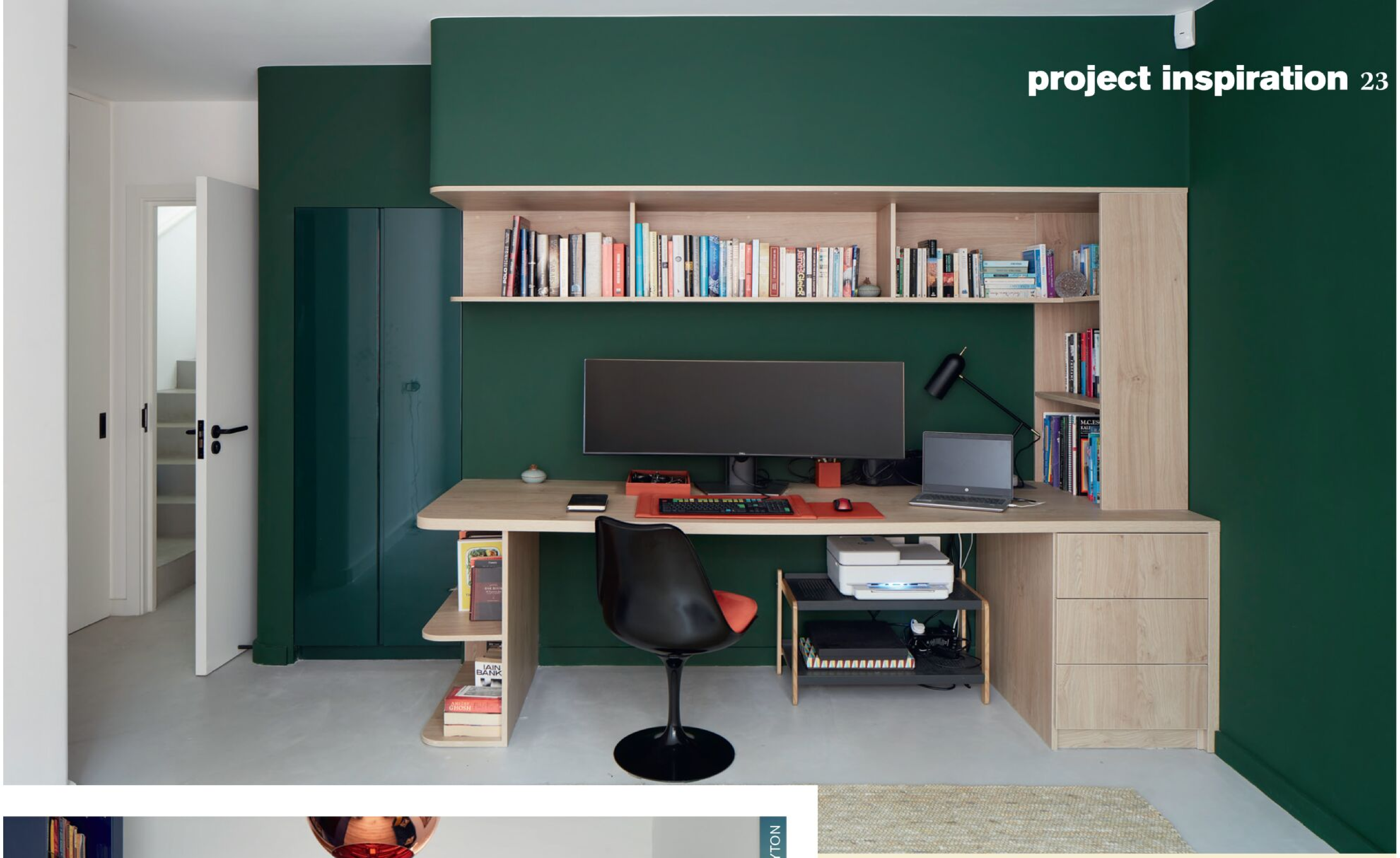
This stunning mews house located in Knightsbridge, London, has been significantly altered, extended and refurbished. The original internal floors and roof structure were demolished before excavating and forming a new lower ground floor extension with an office and cinema. The front and rear elevations were altered in keeping with the building's original character, while the internal spaces have been reconstructed to suit modern living requirements. **(www.rbddesign.com)**

NEIL HEWISON



DIGGING DOWN

Situated in the heart of a conservation area, this 1800s cottage has been extended from a modest 110m^2 to 160m^2 with a new basement and rear extension. The house was enlarged both above and below ground, excavating the existing cellar to the rear of the property and increasing the floor-to-ceiling height. Two full-depth lightwells were added at either end of the basement, alongside a separate access door via stairs in the lightwell, creating a bright, flexible space that doesn't feel closed off. **(www.stalbansbasement.co.uk)**



MATT CLAYTON

COMMON GROUND

Scenario Architecture masterminded this Victorian house renovation and extension in Ealing, London, which involved digging down and expanding the home's useable floorspace. The original period facade remains largely unchanged at the front of the house, maintaining its protected historical character. Inside, the stepped open-plan layout incorporates extensive glazing, allowing natural light to flow throughout the home and into the basement, which houses a sleek work from home office space. **(www.scenarioarchitecture.com)**

COMMON BASEMENT FAQs ANSWERED

DO I NEED PLANNING PERMISSION?

Creating a new basement used to be possible under permitted development. However, councils have become more wary of uncontrolled development and now, most projects will require full planning consent. Key planning considerations include the basement's depth, layout and any impact the project may have on the home's exterior facade. For instance, adding a lightwell to increase daylight access automatically requires consent. An experienced architect or basement specialist will help you navigate any challenges. As part of your application, most local planning authorities want to see a Basement Impact Assessment and Construction Method Statement, which will outline the intended building methods and engineering plans. If you live close to a river or in an area that tends to flood, a flood risk report may be required. Perhaps consider a pre-application to ensure you understand the potential limitations.

WHAT REGULATIONS DO I NEED TO MEET?

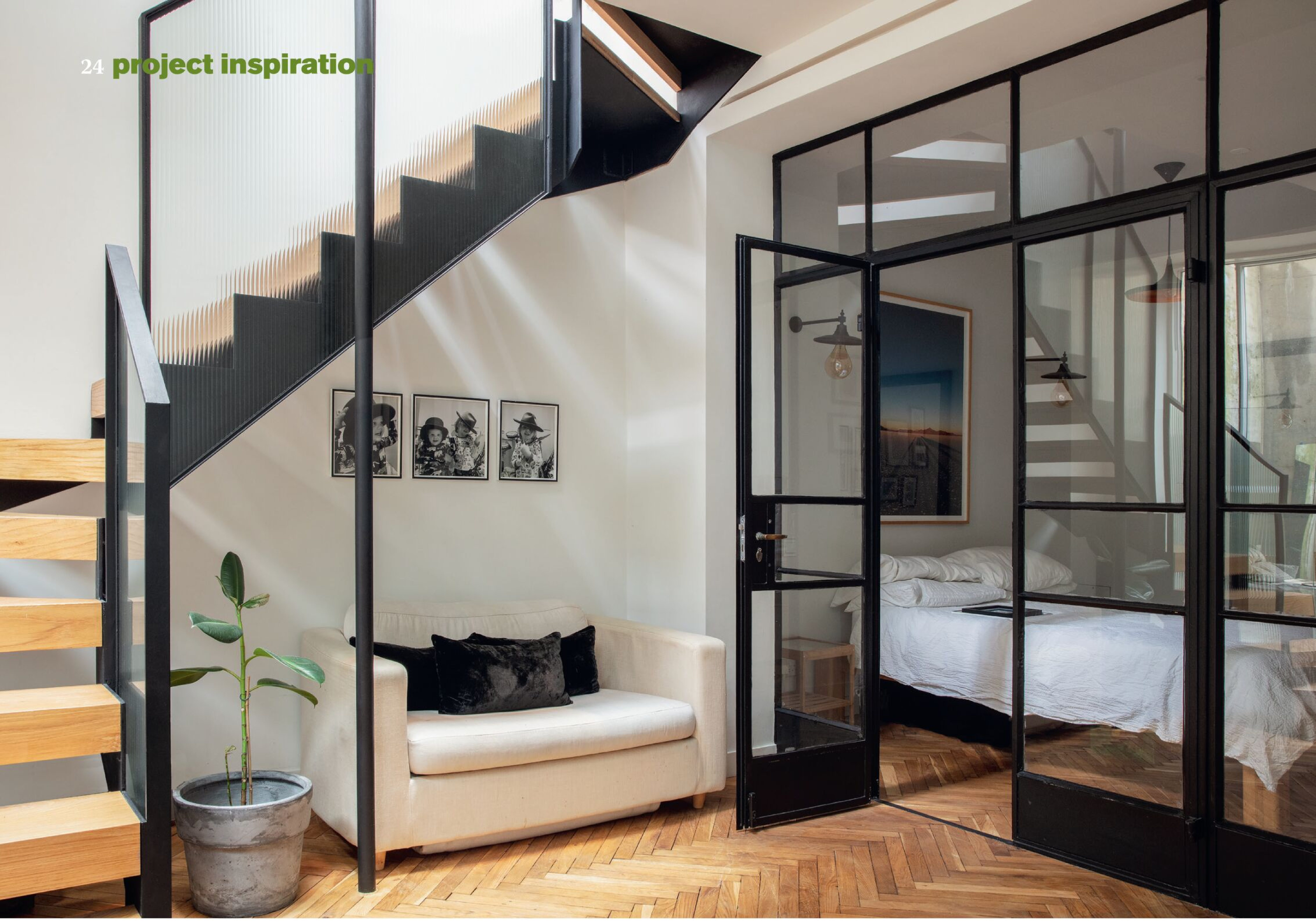
Your project will need to adhere to various guidelines laid out by Building Regulations, including the approved documents regarding the new basement's structure, ventilation, energy efficiency, fire safety and drainage. Waterproofing is one area that you'll need to get right (governed by British Standard 8102:2022). Barrier systems are designed to keep water out, and act as the first line of protection, but most schemes include a backup in case moisture does penetrate. This involves a plastic cavity drainage liner that's fixed to the basement's internal-facing concrete wall. This will catch water that penetrates through, directing it into a sump collection system. The water is then pumped up to a drain at ground level.

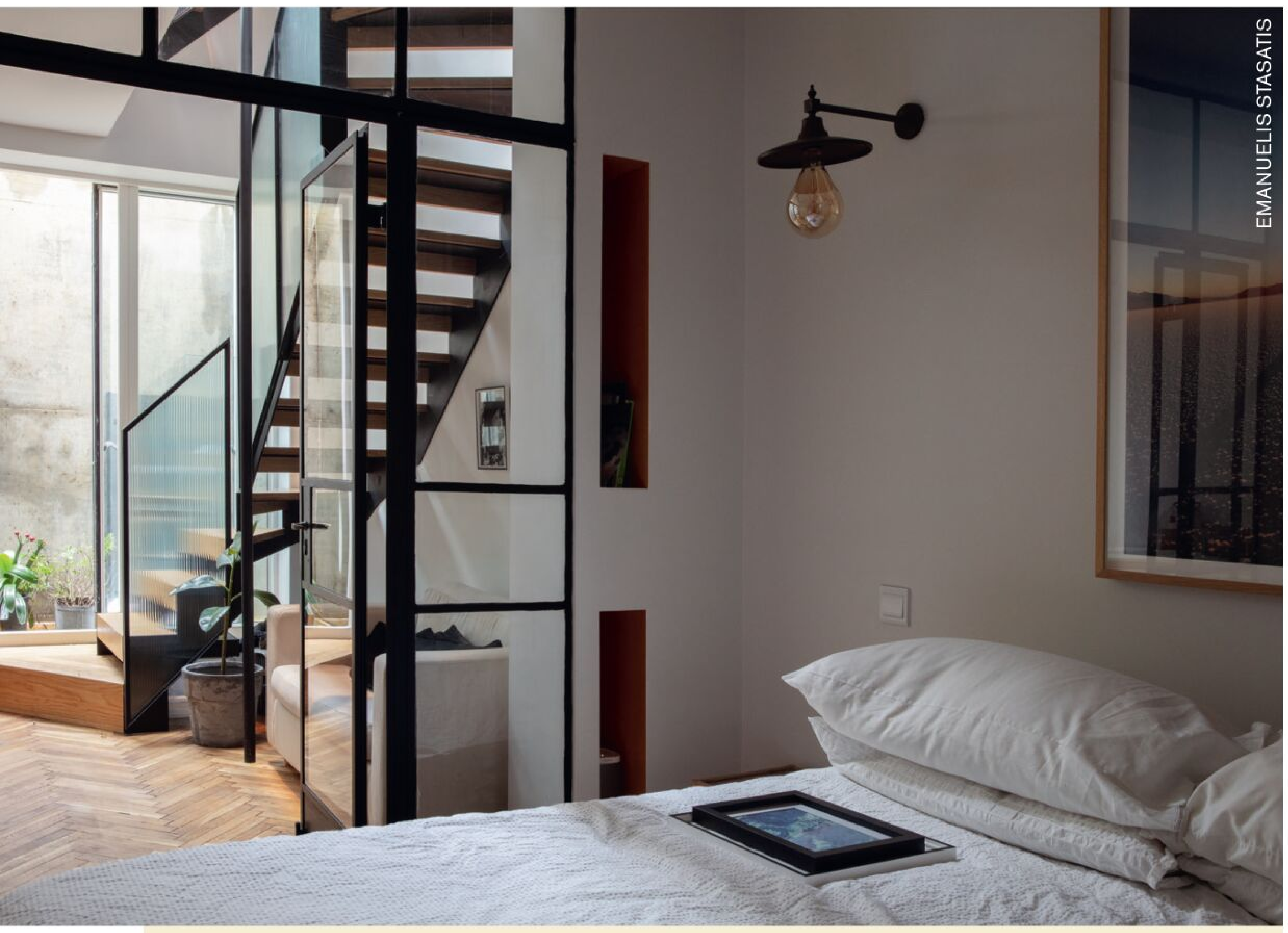
HOW CAN I ENSURE GOOD VENTILATION?

Despite the extensive measures taken when waterproofing a modern basement, the air in a subterranean zone tends to contain more moisture than spaces above ground. An effective ventilation system is therefore essential. It's wise to consider both passive and mechanical ventilation to ensure a healthy exchange of fresh air throughout the zone. Windows, doors and lightwells can help with natural airflow, but consider more advanced solutions such as ducting, extractor fans or MVHR setups.

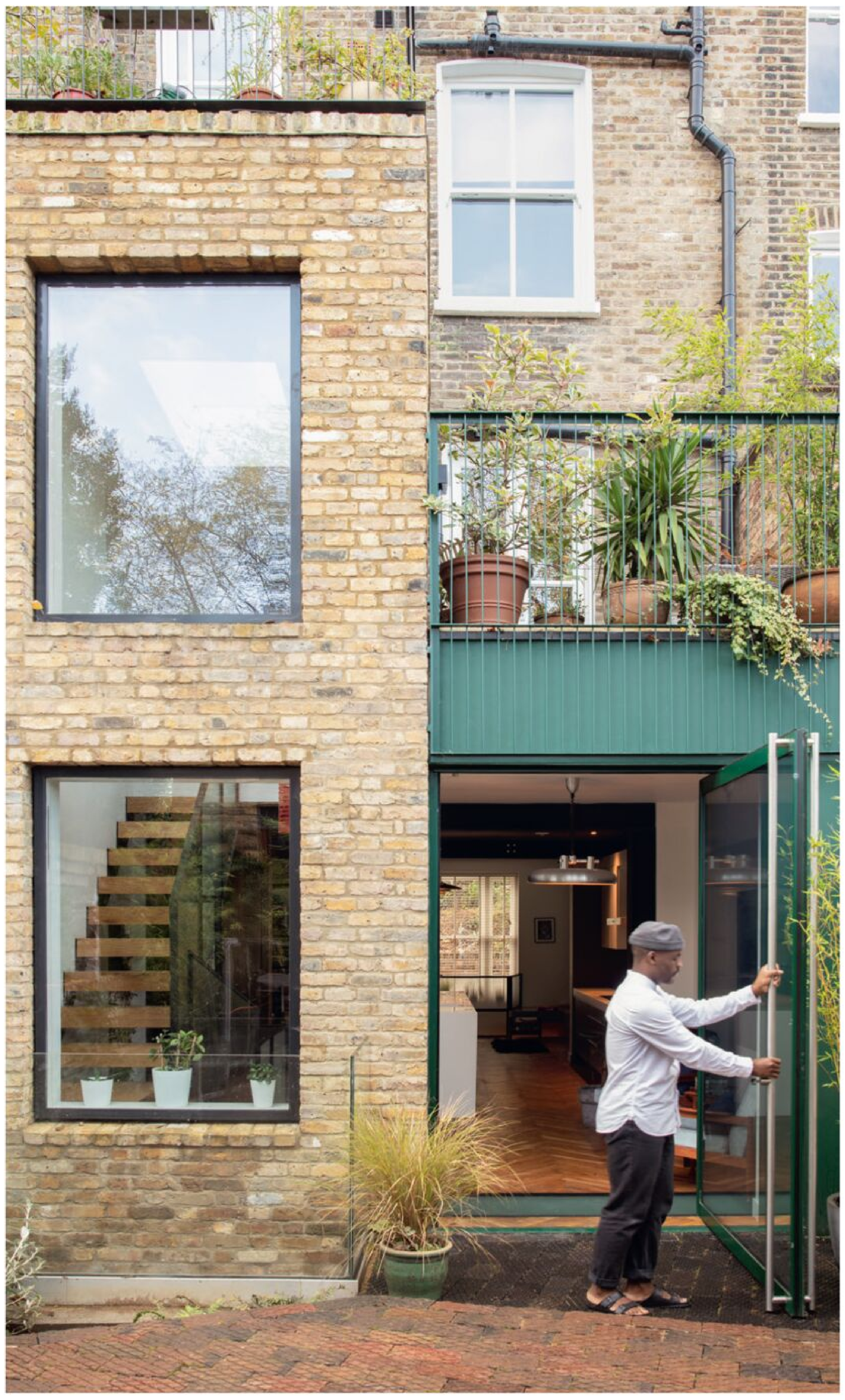
HOW MUCH SHOULD I BUDGET FOR A BASEMENT EXTENSION?

The extent of work required to carry out a full basement extension – including properly sequenced underpinning and supporting the existing house – makes this the most expensive house expansion route. But it can still offer a very good return on investment in urban areas and high-value locations. A typical full basement extension project will start from around **£2,875 per m²** for a waterproofed basement space with floor screed. Visit **www.buildit.co.uk/estimate** to find out more and get accurate estimations for your own project.





EMANUELIS STASATIS



GROUNDBREAKING

Designed by Yard Architects, this four-storey terraced home, situated in a north London conservation area, has been completely transformed with a rear and basement extension. The subterranean zone adds substantial living space to the house in a location where the possibilities for lightwells are fairly limited by conservation area planning rules. The design uses vertical glazing to draw light and views into the basement, complemented by glass partitions that make the underground space feel as bright and functional as the rest of the house. **(www.yardarchitects.co.uk)**

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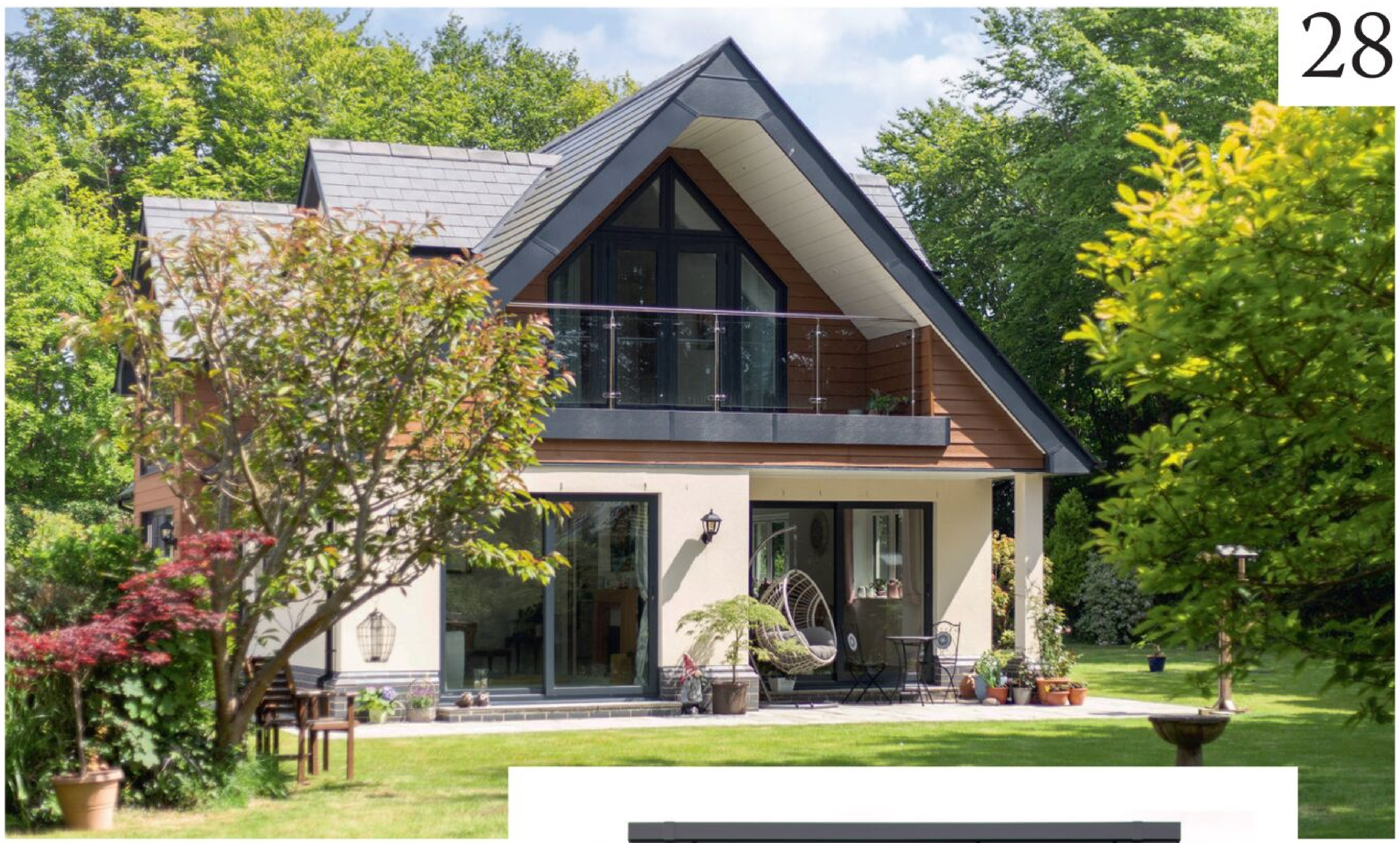
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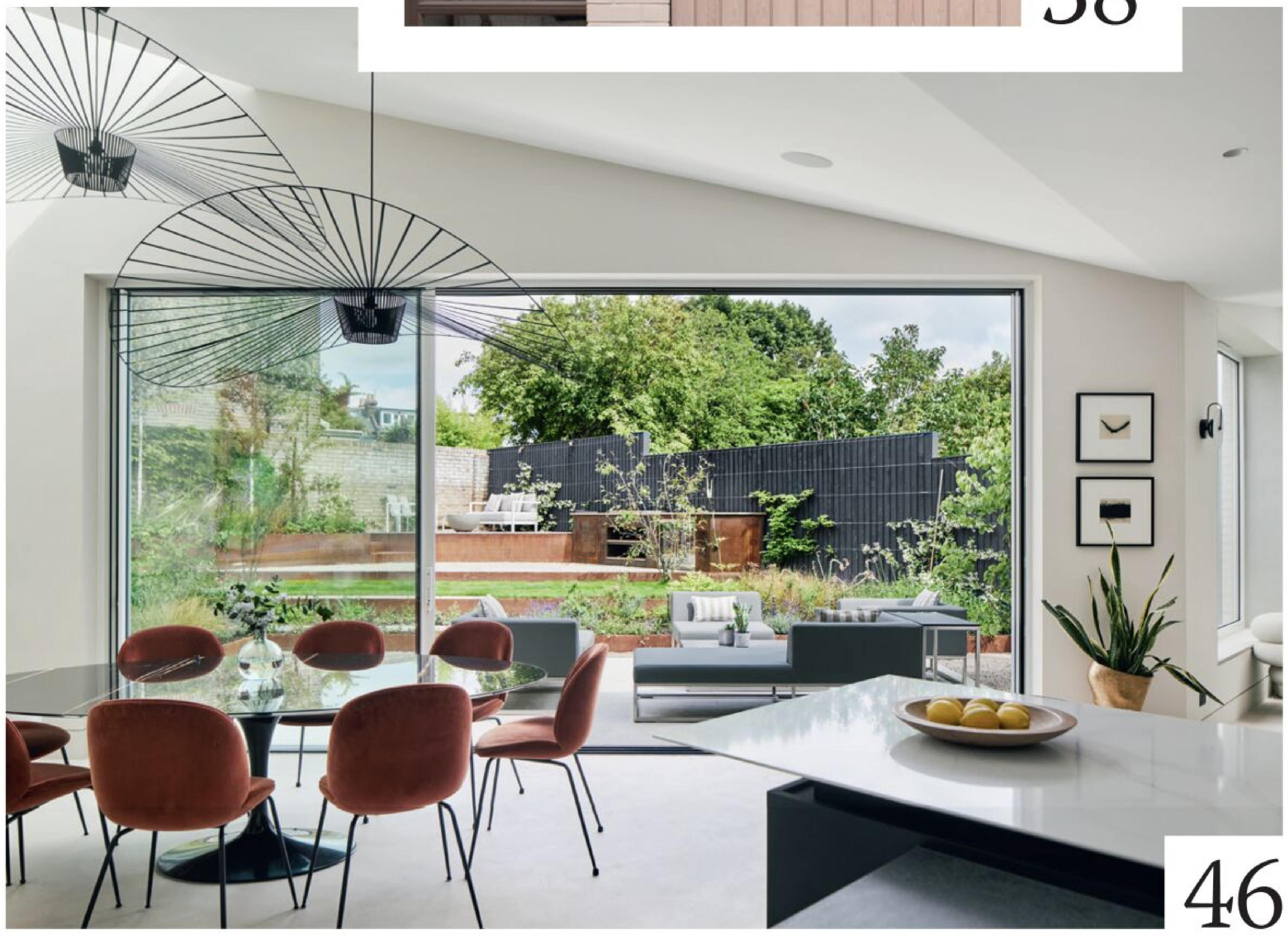
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28 **REVIVAL & REBUILD**

Retired couple Len and Yvonne Rose built a high-performance timber frame home in place of their old thatched cottage after it burnt down in a fire

38 **MODERN WONDER**

Lia and Allen Gill selected a unique 1970s bungalow in need of an upgrade for their renovation and extension project, transforming it into their ideal home

46 **CHASING THE SUN**

Inspired by the Australian lifestyle, Caroline and Alan Burns designed a renovation and extension that maximises access to natural light and fresh airflow throughout the property, with a modern finish

MORE ONLINE ››

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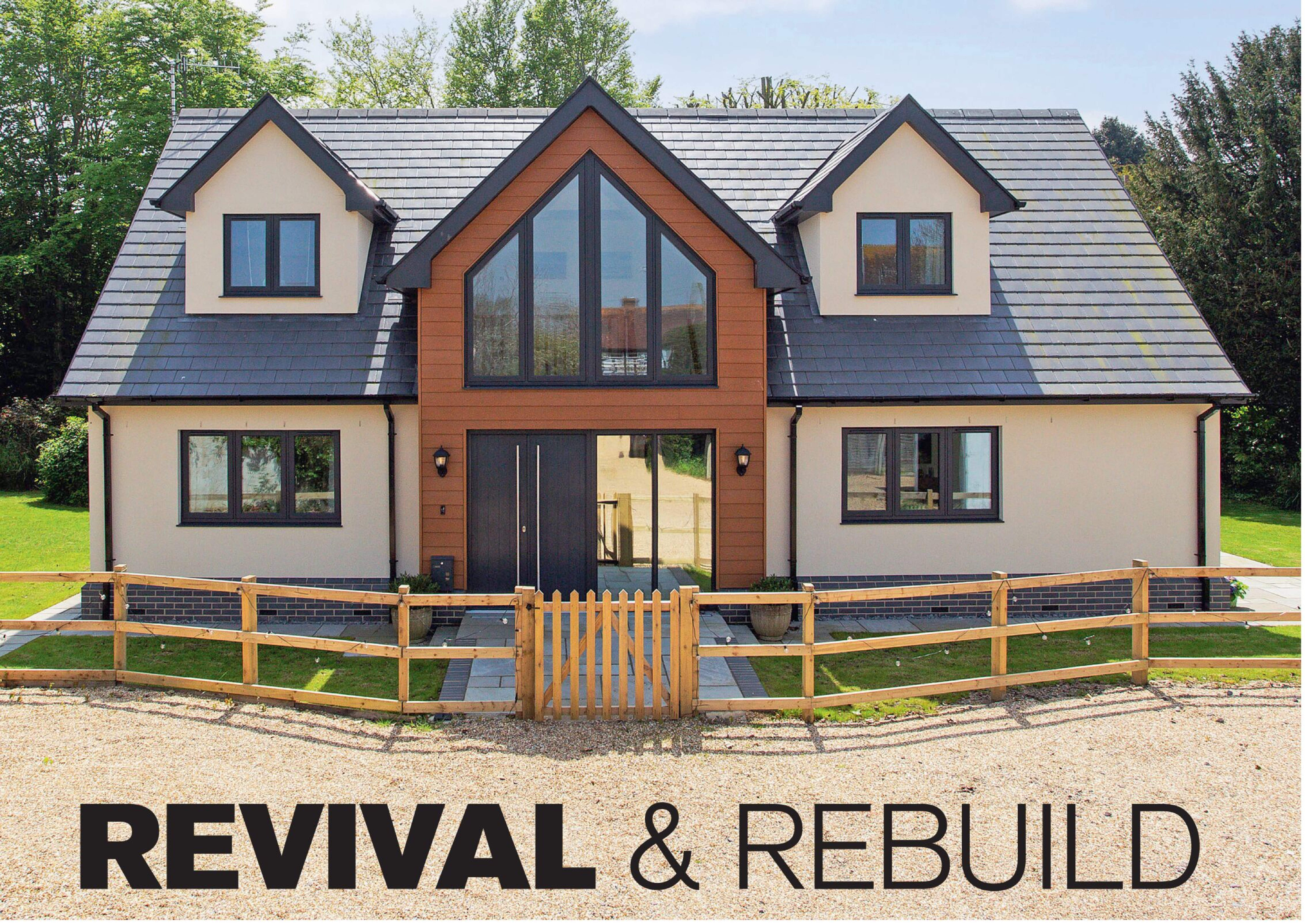


REVIVAL & REBUILD

After a fire destroyed their thatched cottage, **Len & Yvonne Rose** tackled their first self build scheme, creating a modern, chalet-style home on the same plot as their old house

WORDS **JANE CRITTENDEN** PHOTOS **FOURWALLS**

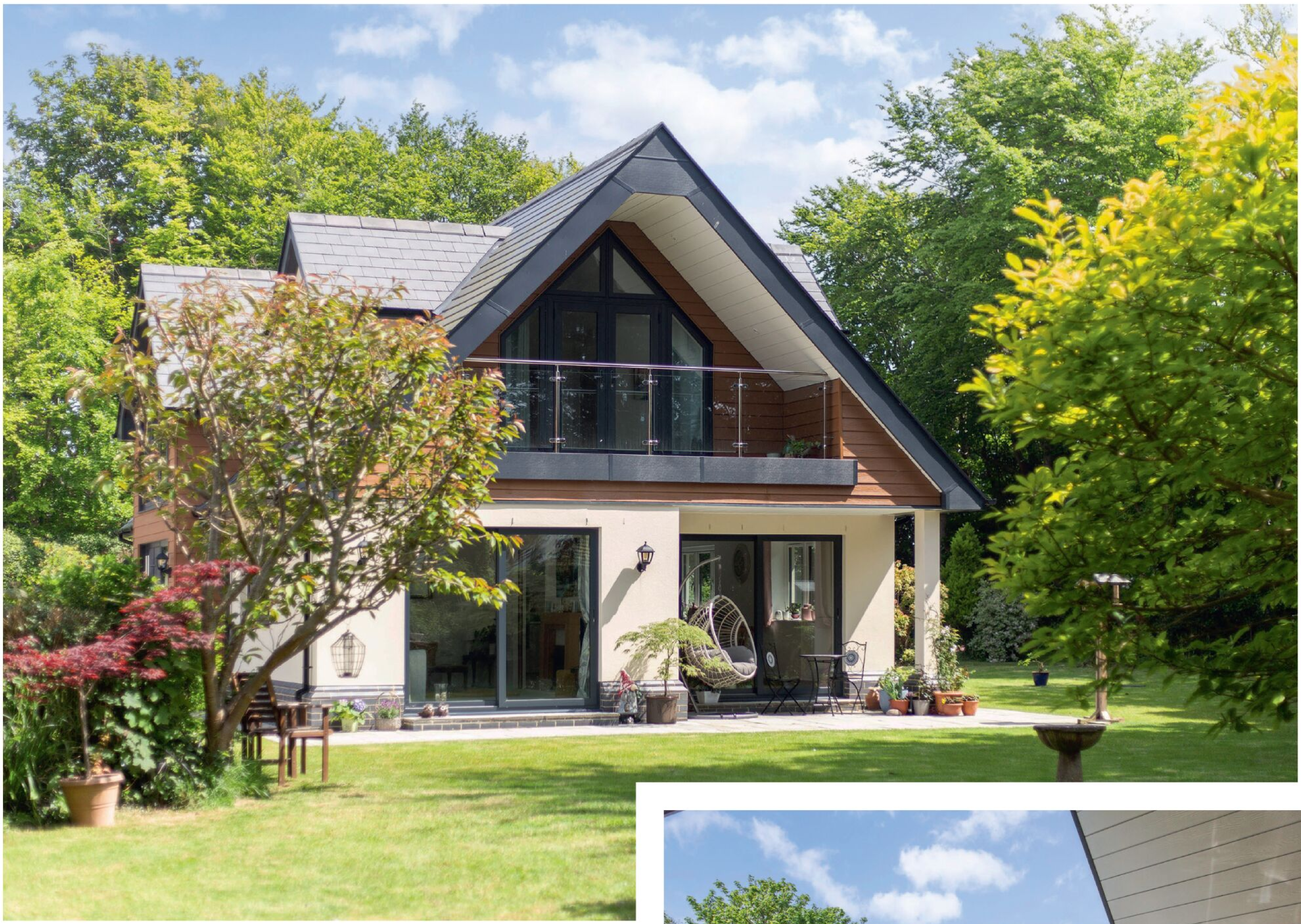
Len and Yvonne Rose had no intention of taking on a self build until 2021, when a fire broke out in their West Sussex thatched cottage and destroyed it. "We had nothing but the clothes we were wearing. We had to move into our daughter's bungalow next door," says Yvonne. "But we're in our 80s and couldn't dwell on what happened. We had to decide – sell the land and buy another house or rebuild on the same plot." Not keen on trying to find a new location to live in, the couple decided to stay put on the plot that had accommodated their home for more than 20 years.

The couple originally moved to Middleton-on-Sea in 1998 to semi-retire and enjoy a slower pace of life on the coast. They had friends who lived in the village and the thatched cottage caught their eye. "We were drawn to the half-acre garden as much as the house," says Len. "We're within walking distance of the shops, there's a sports club across the way and the beach is at the end of the road – it's a very nice location."

The fire occurred in August 2021, when a plumber fitting a new pump on the hot water tank in the loft got too close to the thatch with his blow torch. "We heard him shout for an extinguisher, which of course we had, but the fire had already taken hold. We had to get out straight away," says Len. "Five fire engines arrived 10 minutes later, but the sea breeze encouraged the flames to spread. We watched the cottage burn."

Once the shock of losing their home had subsided a little, Len and Yvonne discussed their options. Despite receiving offers from

Above & left: The roof was delivered with the end trusses already made, plus panels for the dormers. PJR Carpentry & Joinery built the structure with cut timbers on site. Recycled slate-effect tiles from Marley are strong, durable and perform well in the coastal location. Low-maintenance PVCu was chosen for the window frames



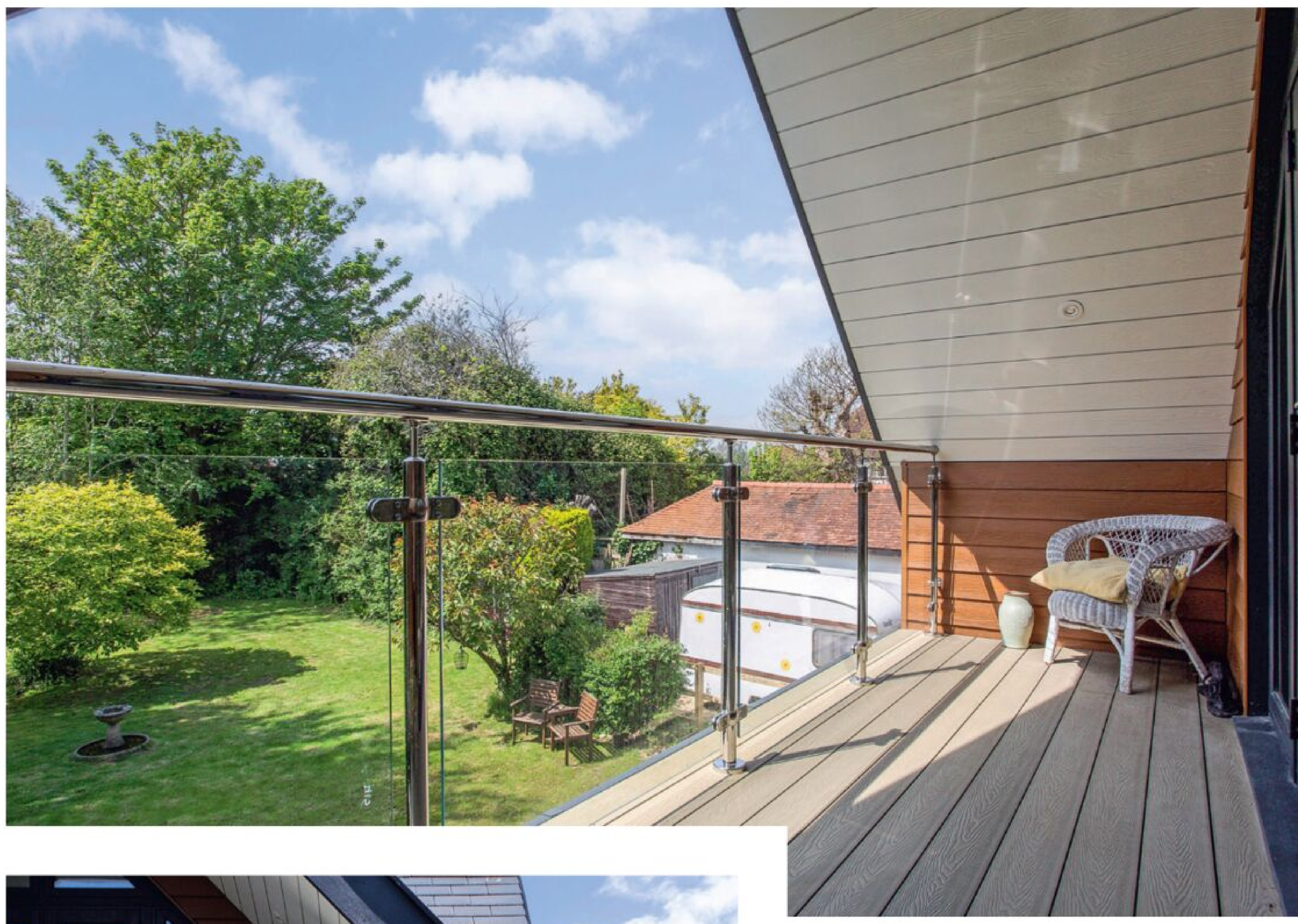
developers to buy the plot, the couple weren't tempted to sell. "We were the wrong age to make a new start somewhere else and didn't want to move away from our friends or our daughter," says Yvonne. "Our large garden and the mature trees were untouched by the fire – we weren't going to find a nicer location to live."

The concept of self building was completely new to the Roses; Len had worked in law enforcement, and they had mostly lived in police properties. They had never tackled a renovation or any other type of development. Despite the loss of their home, the pair remained pragmatic. "I kept waiting for the shock to come. Of course, it was awful to lose photos and family mementoes – but in some ways it felt refreshing to start again," says Yvonne. "The old house had lots of character, but it was getting harder to look after."

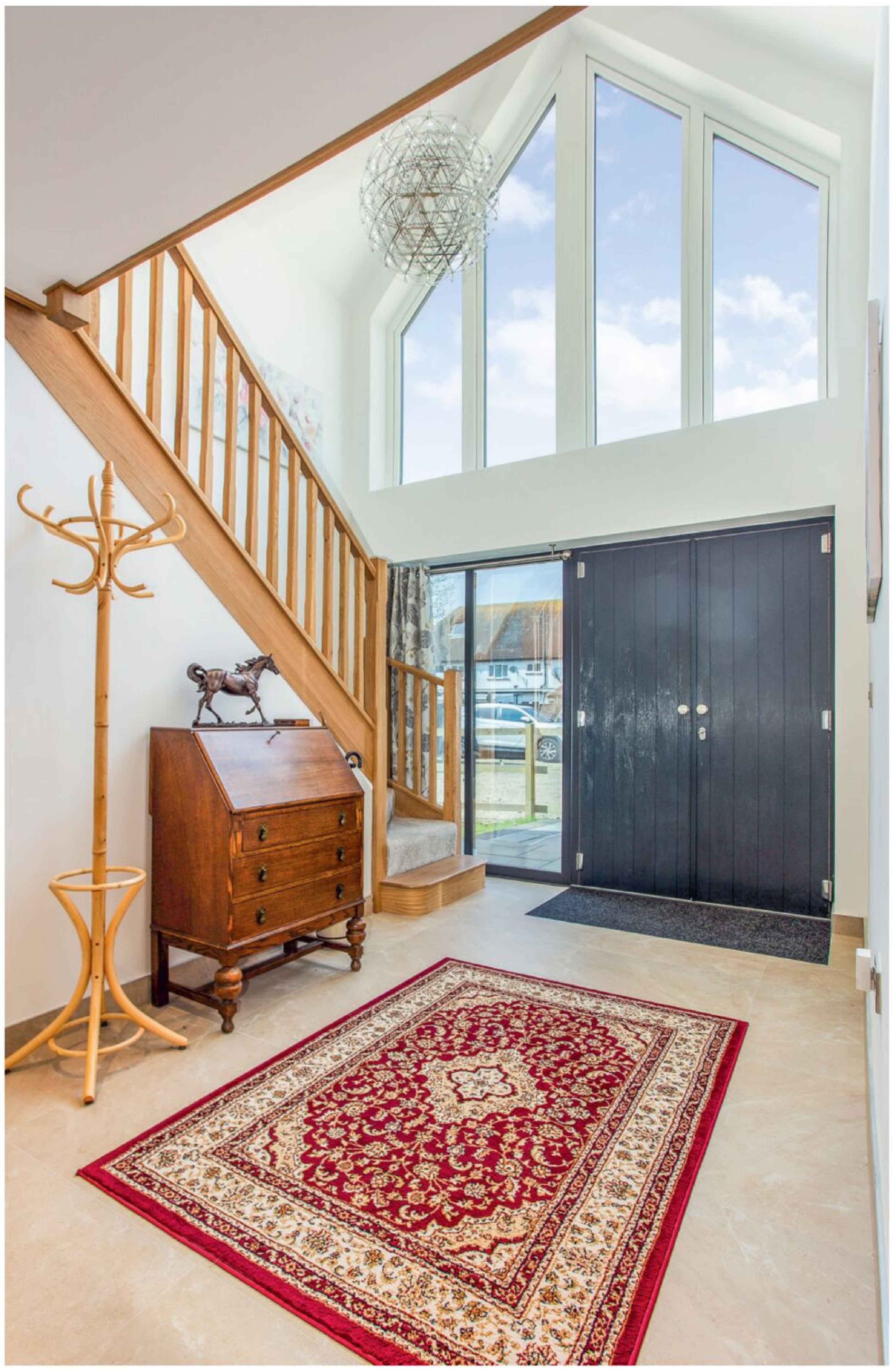
Design decisions

Len and Yvonne were unsure where to begin so their daughter, Melonie guided them through the process. They were both adamant they didn't want their new house to replicate the appearance of their previous thatched cottage. "It needed to look modern and new. We liked the idea of a balcony off our bedroom and a living room we could close off, but also have open to the kitchen-diner," says Yvonne. "We wanted ensuite bedrooms. Plus, because of our age, thought it sensible to have a downstairs bedroom and bathroom."

Melonie research online and pointed her parents towards a brochure she'd requested from Scandia-Hus. She decided that using a timber frame company, where the kit is prefabricated in a factory, would be the quickest way to progress the project. Len and Yvonne were instantly drawn to Scandia-Hus's chalet-style Cranbrook house and went to visit the company to find out more. "We really liked the front gable that created a double-height hallway



Above & left: The gabled bedroom balcony is Yvonne's favourite feature. Below, the couple altered the original layout; the covered veranda now only takes up part of the elevation, with the rest of the zone built-out to enlarge the living room. Meadowgate did the landscaping, while Len and Yvonne's grandson laid the patio and perimeter path slabs



with a galleried landing," says Yvonne. "I loved the balcony and the downstairs snug next to the cloakroom, which could become a bedroom later on – the design felt right for us."

Len and Yvonne's existing garage presented a conundrum, as it hadn't been damaged by the fire and still stood in front of where the original cottage had been. "The insurers allowed £2,000 for renovations. But it was in an awkward position – we knew it would get in the way of the house build," says Len. "We decided to pay to have the garage demolished and rebuilt to the side of the plot."

Financing the project

Meanwhile, Len was in discussions with the insurer to secure the final payout. "We reached a figure, but costs were climbing due to the pandemic. By the time we'd signed a contract with Scandia-Hus,

Far left: Yvonne wanted the island to have a pink front to match the tiled splashback. The customisation work was carried out by PJR Carpentry & Joinery

Below: The couple has fitted an air source heat pump, which powers the UFH downstairs and radiators on the upper level

the price had gone up," says Len. Though Scandia-Hus offer a full turnkey solution, the Roses opted for the building set and shell erection package, with a view to hiring their own contractor. The bundle from Scandia included the insulation, triple-glazed windows, plasterboard, staircase, internal doors and heating system. There were also provisional sums for the kitchen, bathroom and tiles to be supplied by the building contractor, allowing the couple to craft their own specification. They agreed to pay the builder for any overspends that happened along the way, and if the cost came in lower, they'd get a credit from Scandia-Hus.

The company put the Roses in touch with Peter 'Robbo' Robertson, who is subcontracted to build their houses but also has his own business, PJR Carpentry & Joinery. Yvonne and Len

FACT FILE

NAMES Leonard & Yvonne Rose

OCCUPATIONS Retired

LOCATION West Sussex

TYPE OF PROJECT Self build

STYLE Contemporary

PROJECT ROUTE House design & timber frame kit from Scandia-Hus, independent builder hired for construction

CONSTRUCTION METHOD Timber frame

BOUGHT 1998

HOUSE SIZE 146m²

PLOT SIZE 0.5 acres

PROJECT COST £584,670

PROJECT COST PER M² £4,005

BUILDING WORK COMMENCED September 2022

BUILDING WORK TOOK 47 weeks

MOVED IN July 2023

CURRENT VALUE Approx £900,000

Above: Sliding pocket doors give Len and Yvonne the open-plan feel they wanted but with the option to separate the spaces, too

WE LEARNED...

CHOOSE A BUILDER that's been recommended by someone you trust.

BE WARY ABOUT A FIXED PRICE contract that isn't completely transparent about what's included. You don't want unexpected extra costs added onto the total sum as the project progresses.

ASK QUESTIONS if you're unsure about something. Remember that your building contractor and project manager are there to answer any queries and ensure your scheme runs smoothly.

MAKE DECISIONS before the build begins, as much as possible. However, if you do start thinking about changing something once work has gotten underway, you should speak up – you don't want to live with regrets.

worked directly with him, agreeing a fixed price and a four-stage payment plan. "Robbo explained that if we wanted to change our minds or add something on as the project progressed, he'd issue a written variation, which we'd both sign and I'd pay for straightaway," explains Len. "We never had any disagreements about the work he did or what we paid – he was fantastic."

Full steam ahead

Scandia-Hus took the Roses' design to planning in March 2022. With a mix of property styles in the area, the council had no issue with the modern aesthetic and consent came through three months later. Robbo's team started on site in September, knocking down the remains of the cottage and the garage, as well as doing the groundworks. The new floating block and beam foundations were built three times deeper than the original 1920s footings, and a concrete base went down ready for the timber panel framework. "Robbo was very considerate. He put up notices and went to see the neighbours so there were no surprises," says Len. "He's an honest builder with a great team. We were very lucky to have him."

Typically, on a project like this, Scandia-Hus would deliver and erect the timber frame kit before handing over to the main contractor. However, since Robbo is one of their regular house builders, he requested to assemble the frame personally. "I wanted to put the kit up myself so I knew everything would be exactly right,"

Below left: The double-height hallway offers a bright and welcoming entrance, which is highlighted by the characterful oak staircase

he says. "They're very sturdy houses, as Scandia-Hus tend to use 147mm x 47mm TR26 timber studs for their external panels. Whereas, I've seen lower quality, smaller versions used elsewhere in the past." Robbo's worked with the same trades for years and uses them on all his house projects for consistency. "We all know what to expect and want to produce a really high-end result, so everyone does their bit to help the next trade," he says. "I always say, this isn't just a house, this is someone's forever home."

The timber frame kit arrived on site in October, numbered and ready to bolt together. On day one, around 90% of the ground floor walls were up. "After the lorry left we noticed water pooling on the site where they'd driven over a waterpipe," says Robbo. "I called the

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Quality self build timber frame homes

Above: The couple had to source furniture for the entire house. The bed is brand new, but the bedside table and drawers are from Facebook Marketplace

Above left: The elevated outdoor space captures views of the garden

Left: Robbo redesigned the ensuite layout to fit in a bath for Yvonne. Marble-effect tiles and grey floor tiles are the same in all three bathrooms

groundworkers back, so there were 10 of us out there in the dark digging holes, in order to track down the source of the leak."

The binder plate, floor joists and steels followed, then the second-floor walls, steels and roof. The team spent four weeks battling torrential rain and thick ice to get the shell watertight. "Once you start, you have to keep going – it was brutal," says Robbo.

By November the roof tiling was finished, and the following month the windows arrived unglazed. Unfortunately, some of the glass didn't fit the openings correctly and had to be sent back to be remade, which delayed some of the work inside. Otherwise, the project ran smoothly, while Yvonne kept the workers happy with regular rounds of tea and biscuits. "It helped being retired and living next door as we could answer queries quickly," says Len.

Robbo helped the couple with the kitchen and bathrooms, too. Though plans had already been drawn up, they needed to have a closer look on site. "Len and Yvonne dealt with the kitchen supplier directly," says Robbo. "I didn't place the order for the bathrooms until the internal walls were up and it was possible to walk around them, which meant that they could get a feel for the space," he says. "At that point, we adjusted the layouts and I was able to source some higher spec products for a lower price than they expected."

The Roses moved into their new home in July 2023 before the house was officially signed off in October. The landscaping team had started work around the back, not realising the accessibility ramp to the front door needed finishing before building control would issue the completion certificate.

Len and Yvonne love their new abode more than they expected to. "It took us going on holiday and coming back to feel like the house really was our home," says Yvonne. "Considering we lost everything, we feel very lucky. We found nearly everything to go inside the house second-hand – clothes, furniture and all the bits and pieces."

Since moving into their new home, the couple has noticed the benefits of living in a modern, user-friendly property that functions as expected and helps their day-to-day run smoothly. "Our place is very easy to live in," says Yvonne. "Everything works, there's no maintenance and our bills are really low, which is ideal at our time of life. It's especially comforting to still live on the same plot of land with our friends and family around us."

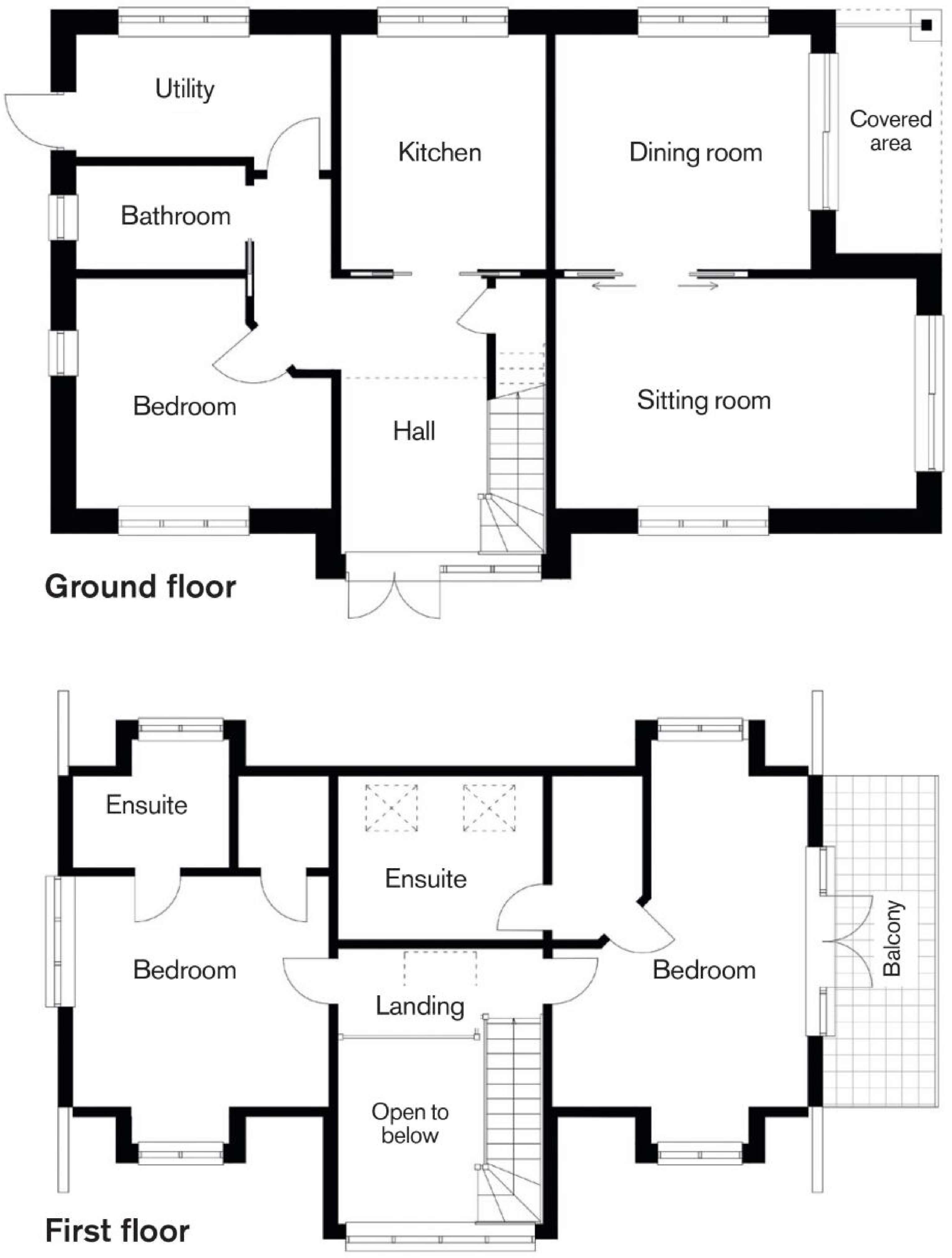
closer look

Impressive thermal performance...

Triple glazing

Len and Yvonne's timber frame kit from Scandia-Hus is an open-panel system. Plumbing, electrics and insulation were installed on site once the frame was erected. The components came with a silver breather membrane on the outside, with a 50mm cavity to the finished exterior face work. The couple also opted to incorporate Actis insulation, a silver foil quilt that wraps over the inner panels and is taped at the seams to ensure the structure is airtight. "There are lots of similar products, but the thermal performance of Actis is unbelievable, as it works with the seasons," says builder, Robbo. "In winter, the heating hits the insulation and reflects it back into the rooms. In summer, outside heat reflects off the external walls to keep the house cool." The house is also triple-glazed to help achieve the energy performance SAP rating required by building control.

Floor plans



TOTAL BUILD COST BREAKDOWN

Elements	Cost m²	Cost %	Total cost
Preliminaries	£325	8%	£47,500
Demolition & groundworks	£394	10%	£57,450
Scandia-Hus kit	£1,404	35%	£205,000
Roof tiling	£170	4%	£24,850
Face brickwork	£144	4%	£21,000
Floor, wall & ceiling finishes	£247	6%	£36,000
Joinery & fittings	£301	8%	£44,000
Plumbing & heating (incl bathroom & kitchen)	£284	7%	£41,500
Electrics	£146	4%	£21,370
Decorating	£96	2%	£14,000
Garage (incl foundations)	£219	5%	£32,000
Fees	£206	5%	£30,000
External works	£69	2%	£10,000
Grand total			**£584,670**

Note: The costs shown here reflect the original prices for materials, labour and services at the time this project was undertaken. As a general guide, inflation in the construction market runs at about 3%-4% per annum.

Useful contacts

TIMBER FRAME **Scandia-Hus** 01342 838060 www.scandia-hus.co.uk MAIN CONTRACTOR **PJR Carpentry & Joinery (Peter Robertson)** 07789 084778 DEMOLITION, GROUNDWORKS & LANDSCAPING **Meadowgate Construction** 07824 994391 www.meadowgateconstruction.co.uk ROOFING **Storm Roofing** 07779 140267 ROOF TILES **Marley** 01283 722588 www.marley.co.uk PLUMBING & HEATING **WPH Plumbing & Heating** 01798 874455 ELECTRICS **HUD Electrical** 07837 639235 PLASTERING & RENDERING **GH Plastering Southern** 07803 824390 RENDER **K-Rend** 02828 262175 www.k-rend.co.uk INSULATION **Actis** 01249462888 www.insulation-actis.com KITCHEN **Richard Fulbrook** 07912 662988 DECORATING **Divine Projects** 07850 032570 DECKING **Dino Decking** 01942 355968 www.dino.co.uk MATERIALS **Jewson** 024 7660 8235 www.jewson.co.uk

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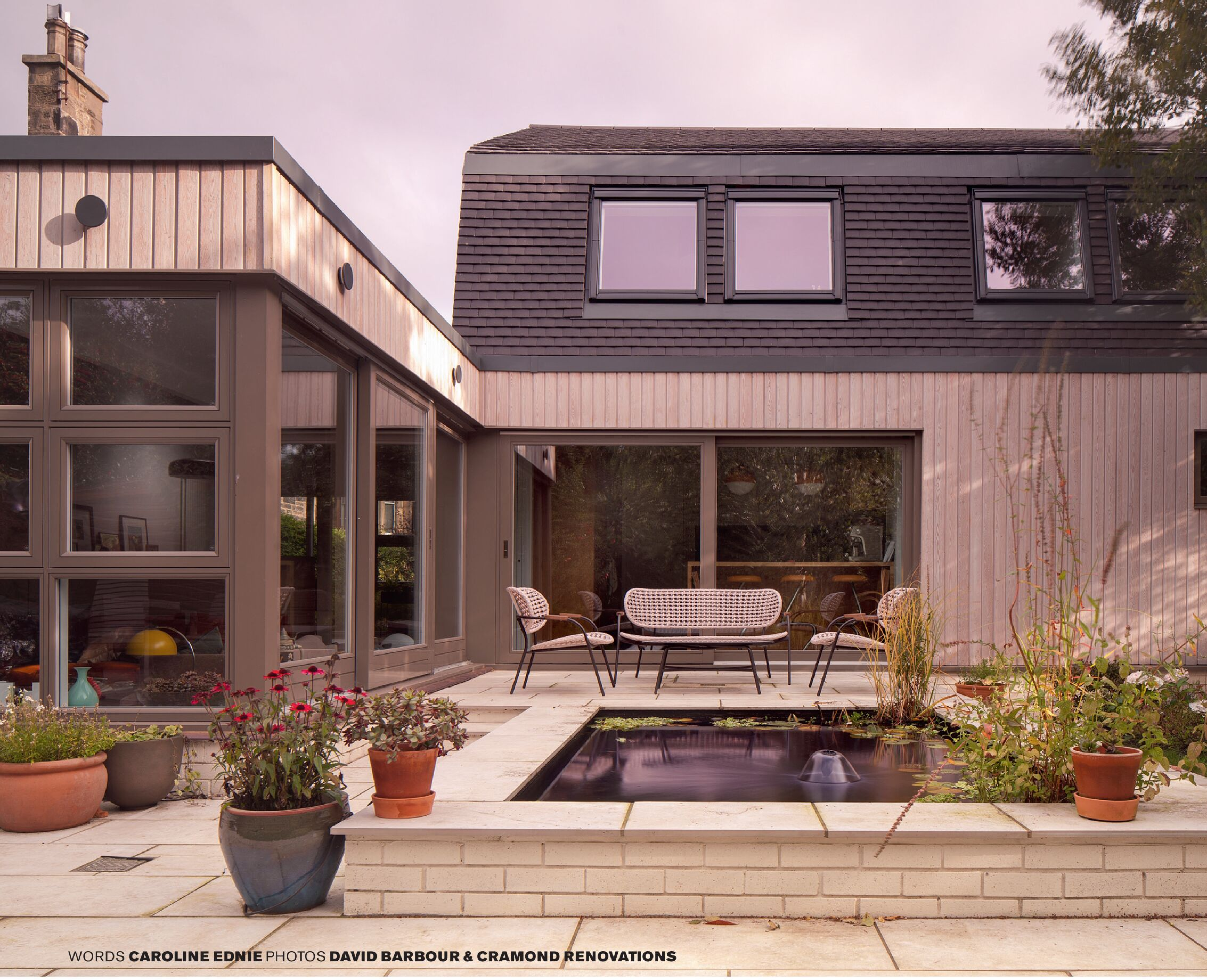


WORDS **CAROLINE EDNIE** PHOTOS **DAVID BARBOUR & CRAMOND RENOVATIONS**

MODERN WONDER

An unusual 1970s bungalow proved to be the ideal renovation opportunity for **Lia & Allan Gill**

Above: The rear extension is a timber frame construction and replaces the lower portion of the concrete tiled pitch roof. The landscaping, which includes a pond on the new raised patio area, was a collaboration between Lia, TAP Architects and Water Gems Landscaping Contractor

Back in 2021, following years of living across the UK and abroad, Lia and Allan Gill decided the time was right to return to their hometown of Edinburgh. Lia quickly spotted an unusual house for sale in a leafy suburb in the city's south, sparking her interest and marking the start of a fascinating renovation journey.

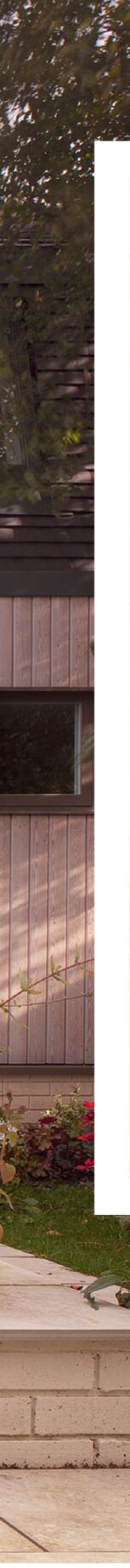
Set on a street comprising mainly elegant period sandstone villas, the property was a one-off 1970s house with a steep roof of concrete tiles, reaching right to the ground. It looked slightly dark and forbidding next to its neighbours. "When we went to see it, I thought 'you must be kidding'. The roof was like a ski slope," says Allan. "But, after going inside, we fell in love with the configuration. The main lounge is sunken and has a cosy feel. Plus, the interior spaces were great."

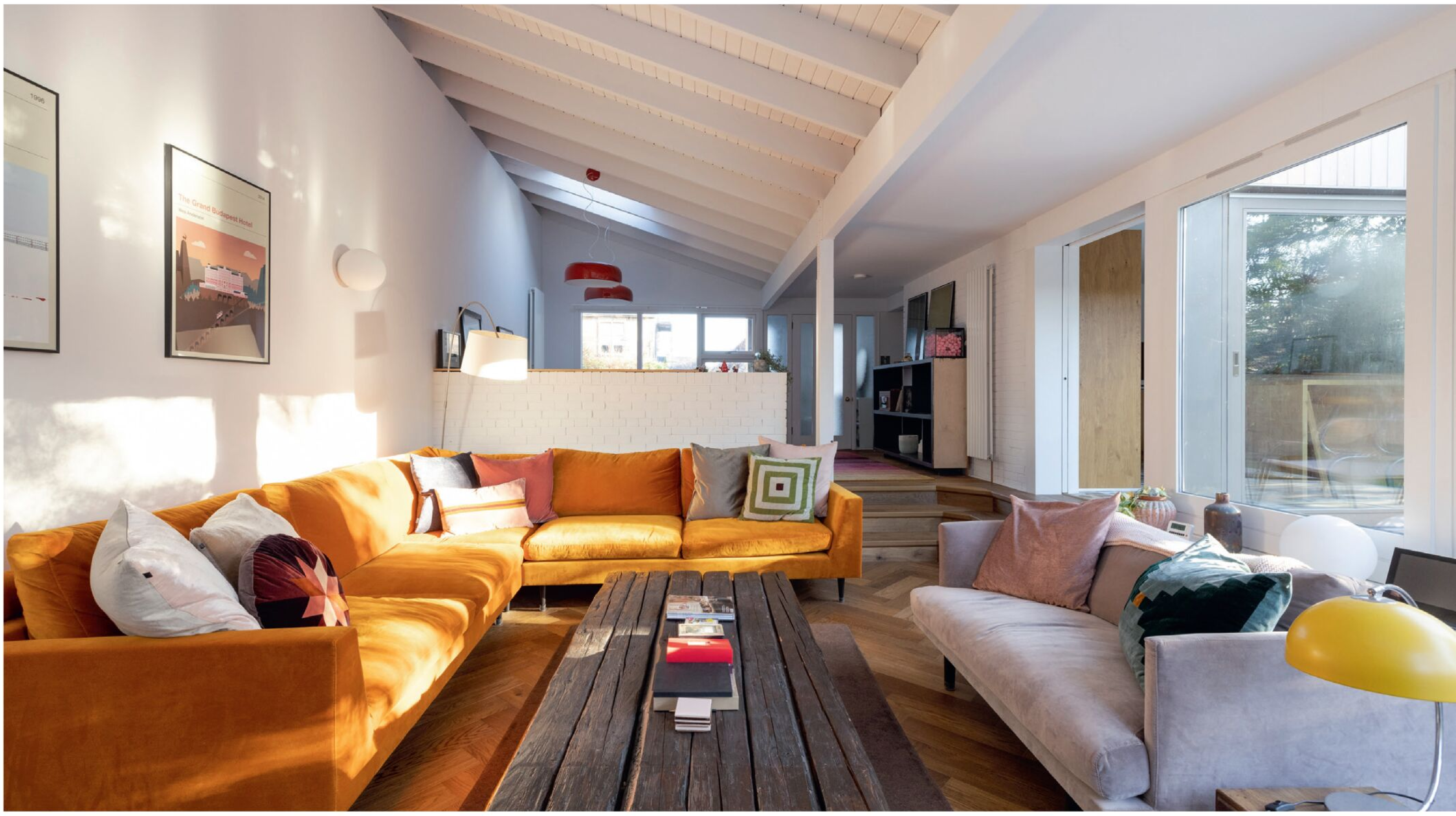
Developing a design

Seeing real potential, the couple decided to purchase the property. "We dug into the history of the house, which was designed by a Dutch architect and built on tennis courts that belonged to a former private girls' school," says Allan. "Not a lot had been done to it for a long time. It was maintained, but we knew the electrics would need renewing and the heating would require an upgrade. But our big idea was to change the aesthetic of the house."

The Gills already had a plan for what they wanted to do, but lived in the house for around six months to refine their ideas and give themselves time to find a builder. "We chose Cramond Renovation, as the company's owner, Tom Brady, is an absolute craftsman," says Allan. "The market was going mad due to the global pandemic, with a shortage of supplies of wood and glass. It was an expensive time to do up a property, but we accepted their quote."

During this initial period, Lia and Allan also searched for an architect. They admired Neil Taylor's work, from Edinburgh based

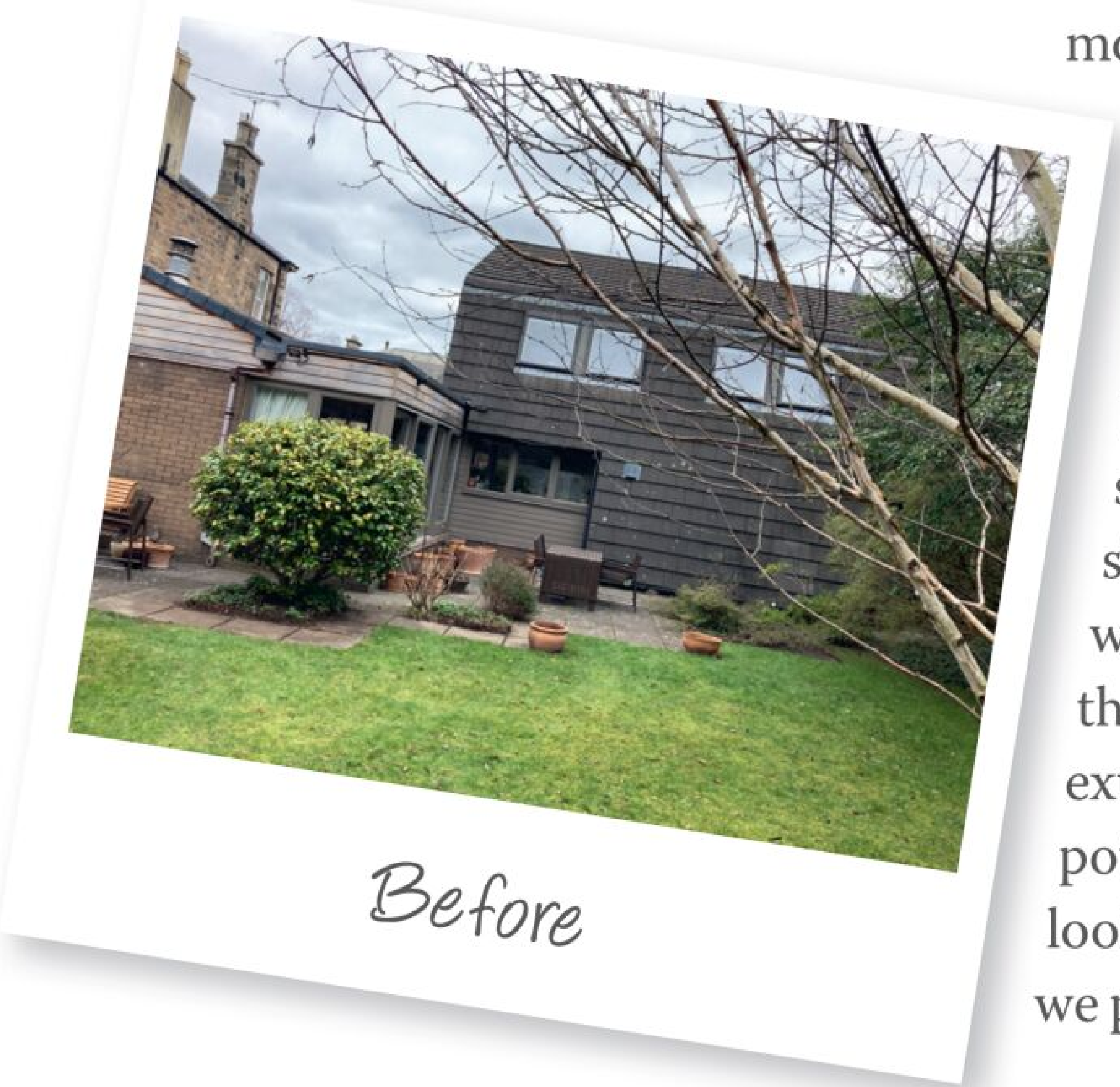




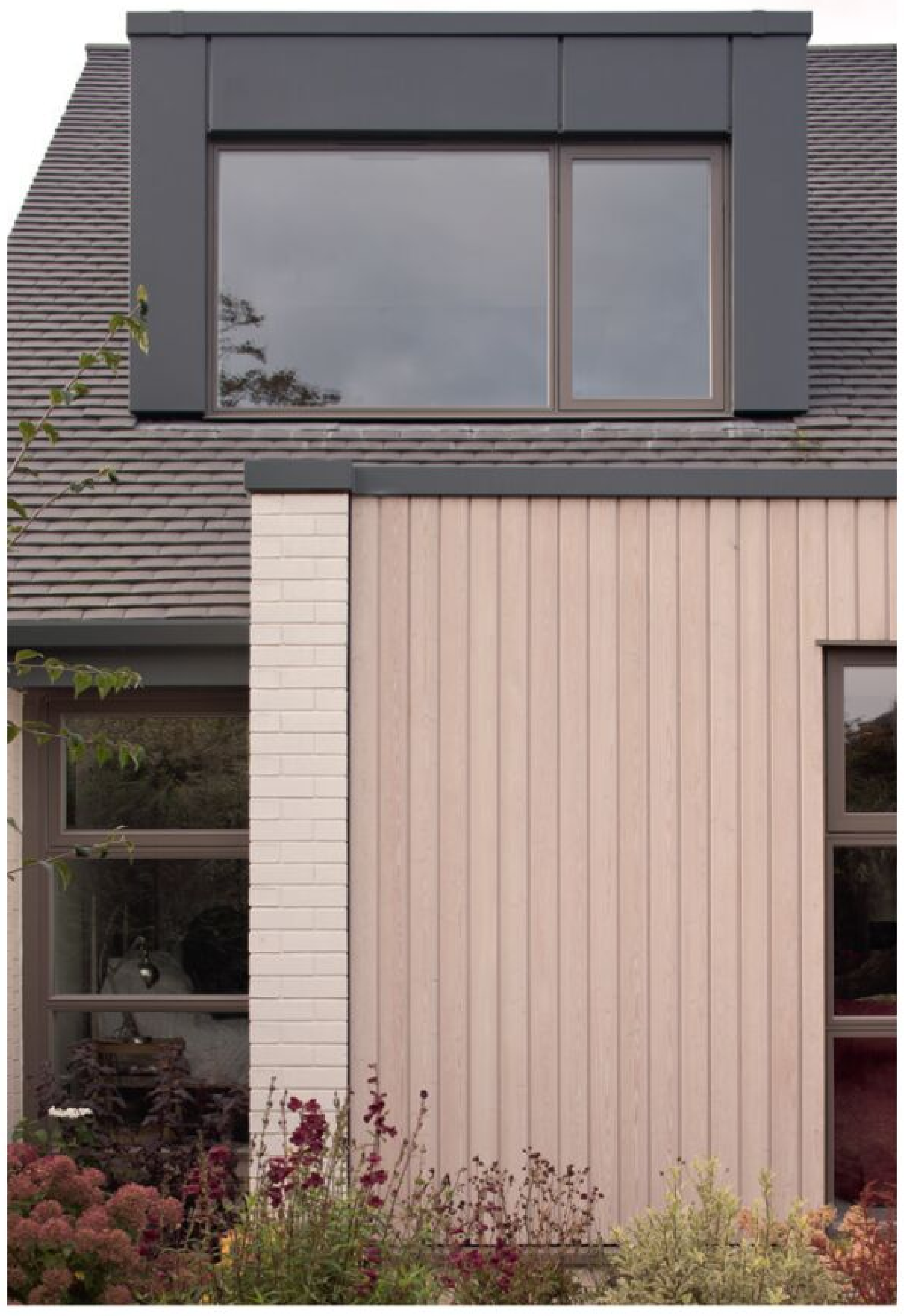
TAP, who subsequently came on board. "The main problem was the overbearing roof, which came down to ground level on both front and rear elevations and was clad in heavy, grey concrete tiles," says Neil. "The rooms under the bottom section of the roof were quite odd, as they had little slot windows, which were overhung by the roof, so there was not much daylight in the living room – or any of the rooms."

The kitchen and utility room were too small for Lia and Allan, and there was no connection from the kitchen to the garden. Upstairs had a convoluted, irrational layout. From the front of the house there were great views, but no windows to take advantage of them.

Neil's aim was to transform the roof and make the whole house into a more coherent and contemporary composition. TAP's proposals involved removing the entire lower portion of the roof on both the front and back, and to install a new ground-level facade in timber, glass and brick. A bay would be added to the front elevation, along with a new dormer window to help break up the mass of the building and give it a more domestic scale.



In addition, a new extension would establish a much larger kitchen and connect seamlessly to the single-storey entrance wing. "We felt that adding more extensions could potentially end up looking messy – so we planned to cut away the roof and add a simple glazed element instead," says Neil.

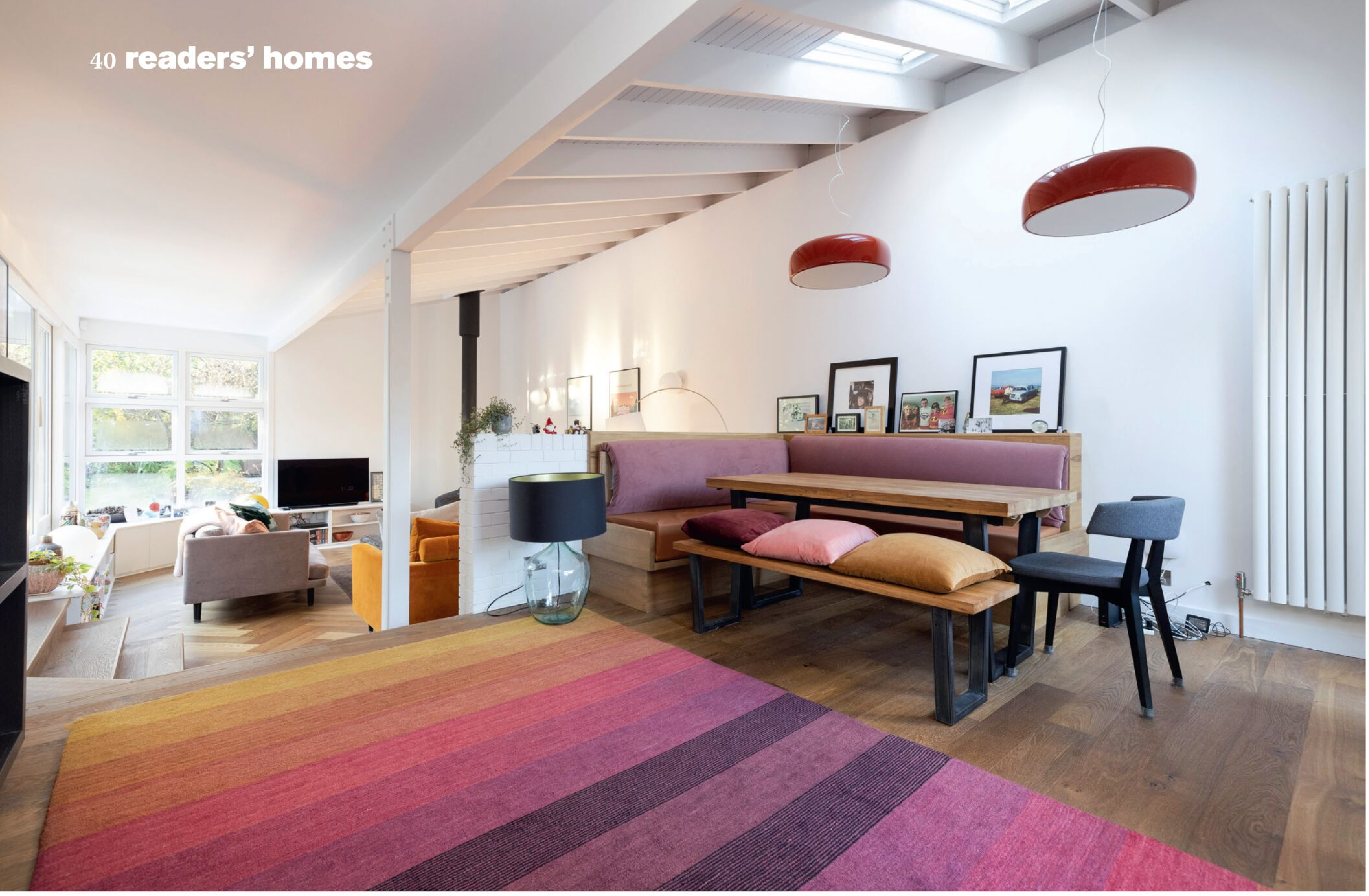


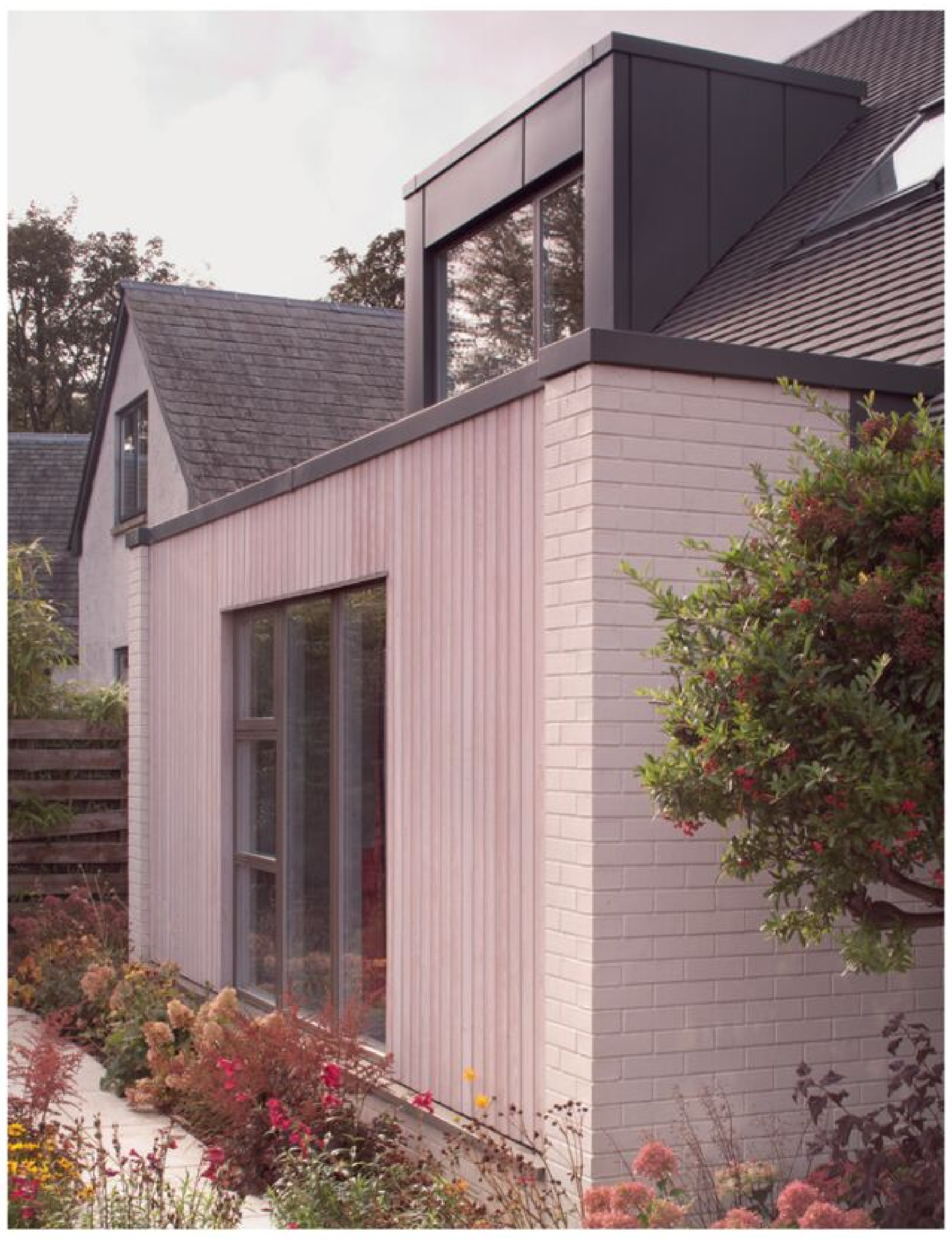
Super structure

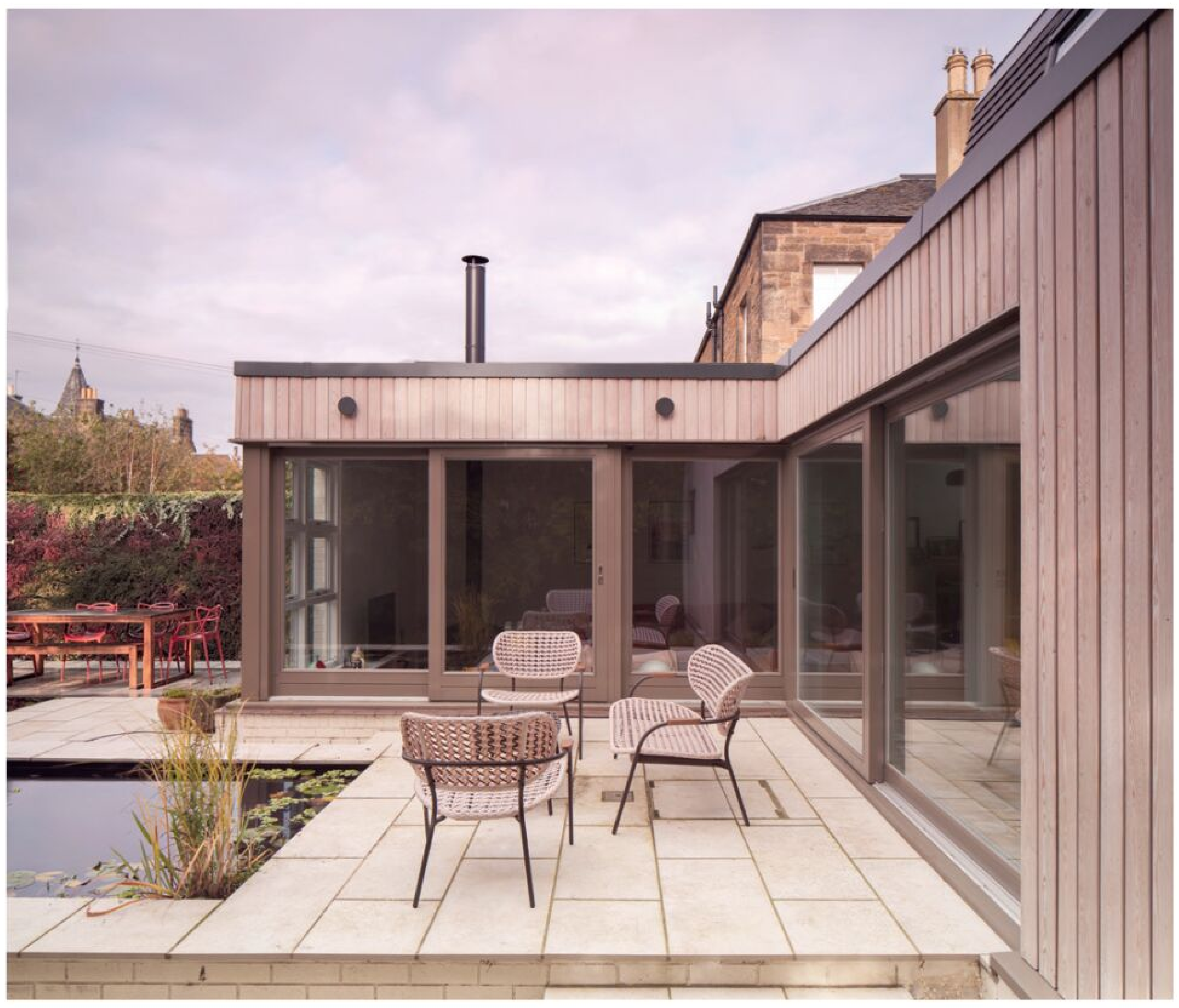
Despite the fact that the property is situated within a conservation area, the design proposal was viewed as an improvement to the house and street scene, and sailed through the planning process without any issues. However, tackling the physical building work on this complex project, in the midst of Covid lockdowns, proved to be much more challenging. Construction took a total of six months, during which time the couple moved into another property they owned in Edinburgh.

"The trickiest thing about this scheme was that there were no repeated details; just lots of individual interventions all around the building," says Neil. "We were cutting into the roof, for instance, which was steeper at the back than the front. There wasn't a full set of original drawings to follow, so we weren't sure what we'd find and had to pay close attention to every single detail."

The planned renovation included putting in the dormer, changing cladding, erecting two extensions, structural alterations and more. Without being certain about the extent of work needed, it was difficult to give a cost estimate. "Covid also played a huge part, as it had a massive impact on construction costs," says Neil, who cites inflation in materials prices and difficulties getting contractors







Above & right: The original beams, exposed brick walls and windows in the lounge have been retained and painted white

Left: Extending a metre into the garden with a fully-glazed facade has opened the house up to the exterior space

Below: The staircase has been stripped back and painted white. The new treads are Russwood oak, and match the flooring that's been laid throughout much of the property

to provide firm quotes as the biggest factors. "There was constant checking to ensure the cost was manageable," he says.

To keep the budget in order, a number of cost savings were made – including retaining the single storey zone's roof and glazing system, which was also used all around the garden elevation of the living room. "It would have cost a lot to replace, so instead we used the same specification and supplier for the new kitchen windows – essentially it's identical to the existing, and works well," says Neil.

The main roof's tiles were removed and a smaller, slightly-curved dark-grey concrete alternative was selected to replace them, closer in size to the slates on neighbouring properties. The roof edges were overclad and the guttering was replaced, all in dark-grey aluminium. For a fresh contemporary look, the brown brickwork was painted white. The existing cladding on the side of the living room wing was replaced with larch boards, treated with a whitening preservative. Alongside the improved proportions, this palette of materials has

FACT FILE

NAMES Lia & Allan Gill

OCCUPATIONS IT manager & journalist (both retired)

LOCATION Edinburgh

TYPE OF PROJECT Renovation & extension

STYLE Contemporary (1970s)

CONSTRUCT METHOD Timber frame

PROJECT ROUTE Architect & builder

PLOT SIZE 630m²

HOUSE SIZE 200m²

PROJECT COST £240,000

PROJECT COST PER M² £1,025

BUILDING WORK COMMENCED January 2022

BUILDING WORK TOOK Six months

had a transformative effect on the appearance of the house at street level.

Garden living

The new extension was a key piece of the puzzle. Built in timber frame, it adds significant space to the once-cramped kitchen, and features large sliding doors that provide direct access out to the garden. "Our solution was to take away the roof at ground floor level and extend out into the garden by about a metre," explains Neil. "This creates a connection between the kitchen, dining and living areas, as well as allowing for a fully-glazed facade opening up to the garden."

In keeping with the ethos of creating a coherent house, the team went to a lot of effort to ensure that the extension would complement the existing architecture. "We connected the two zones by picking up parapet heights and recladding the single-storey wing in the same timber as the new structure," says Neil.

The resulting L-shaped arrangement provides a sheltered courtyard space, with a new pond set into the adjoining raised patio. TAP designed the overall landscaping layout alongside Lia, who then drove the detail of the courtyard, patio and pond design alongside the specialist team at Water Gems Landscape Contractor. "The pond was a bit of extravagance," says Allan. "But sunlight reflects off the surface and into the walls of the main lounge, which gives a lovely calming effect."

Kitting out

Internally, the layout has been revamped and almost every room completely overhauled. "There was a lot of stripping out, tidying and modernising," says Neil. "We fitted some insulation and replaced all of the Velux windows, but a new boiler had been installed by the previous owner, so that was kept."

The three bedrooms at the front of the house were reconfigured and the stairs refurbished. Upstairs, partitions and doors were

TAP suggested the new kitchen layout, which was then made bespoke for the couple by a local specialist

rearranged to establish a master bedroom, bathroom and one long room – the new library-cum-office, which benefits from daylight and views thanks to the glazing. "It was a memorable moment when they took the sheeting away from the dormer and showed us the view," says Neil, who made the suggestion to add this feature. "It's amazing, as you get this outlook of Arthur's Seat from the upstairs lounge/study," says Allan. "It's a real picture window. We are delighted we went the extra mile to get the dormer."

Another transformative intervention has been the rooflights above the dining room table, which bring in plentiful daylight. "The large adjacent window is east-facing, so without the rooflights you wouldn't get natural brightness at the end of the day," says Neil.

All the exposed pine timbers in the original pitched ceiling have been retained and painted white, as have the walls and new plasterboard ceiling from the entrance to the lounge. Oak floors

WE LEARNED...

SPECIFICATION DISPUTES are the most challenging aspect of a project. Ultimately, its you, the client, who has to live with the consequences – not the builder, supplier or architect.

LESS IS SOMETIMES MORE. We put in too many exterior wall lights, for instance, which means the paving has ended up looking a bit too bright.

A GREAT CONTRACTOR IS WORTH WAITING FOR. Tom Brady at Cramond Renovations is a fantastic builder and master craftsman. We spent six months looking for a professional, and we're glad we held out for the right one.

WINDOWS ARE KEY. Our new sliding doors in the kitchen, which lead directly to the garden, the dormer upstairs and the rooflights above the dining table all contribute to transforming a once-dark building into a light-filled home.

Opposite page, top left: The tiles, finishes and retro lighting were chosen to reflect the house's 1970s origins

Right & below: Lia and Allan chose to add a splash of colour in the bathroom, to contrast with the neutral palette throughout the house

Opposite page, left: The library on the upper level, which can double as a bedroom if required, has been opened up by the new dormer window – offering natural light and beautiful views over Edinburgh

from Russwood provide a hardwearing, natural finish underfoot. The joyful interior design by Allan and Lia is characterised by bright colours and highly patterned surfaces. "We looked at every facet very closely, and were happy to travel to get what we wanted in terms of the furniture and finishes. We went to great lengths, but it felt like a holiday to us," says Allan. "In the past, we've done a few projects, including a complete renovation of our former house in a village above Lake Geneva in Switzerland, so we knew what was involved."

The result is a long-term home that perfectly suits the couple, with an ideal layout and flow, light-filled interiors, strong garden connections, beautiful views and, very importantly, exceptional comfort. "We've been in a lot of houses all over the country and overseas, and this one and the area is incredibly tranquil, yet we're only 20 minutes from the centre of Edinburgh," says Allan. "We are highly privileged to live here, and we know it."

closer look

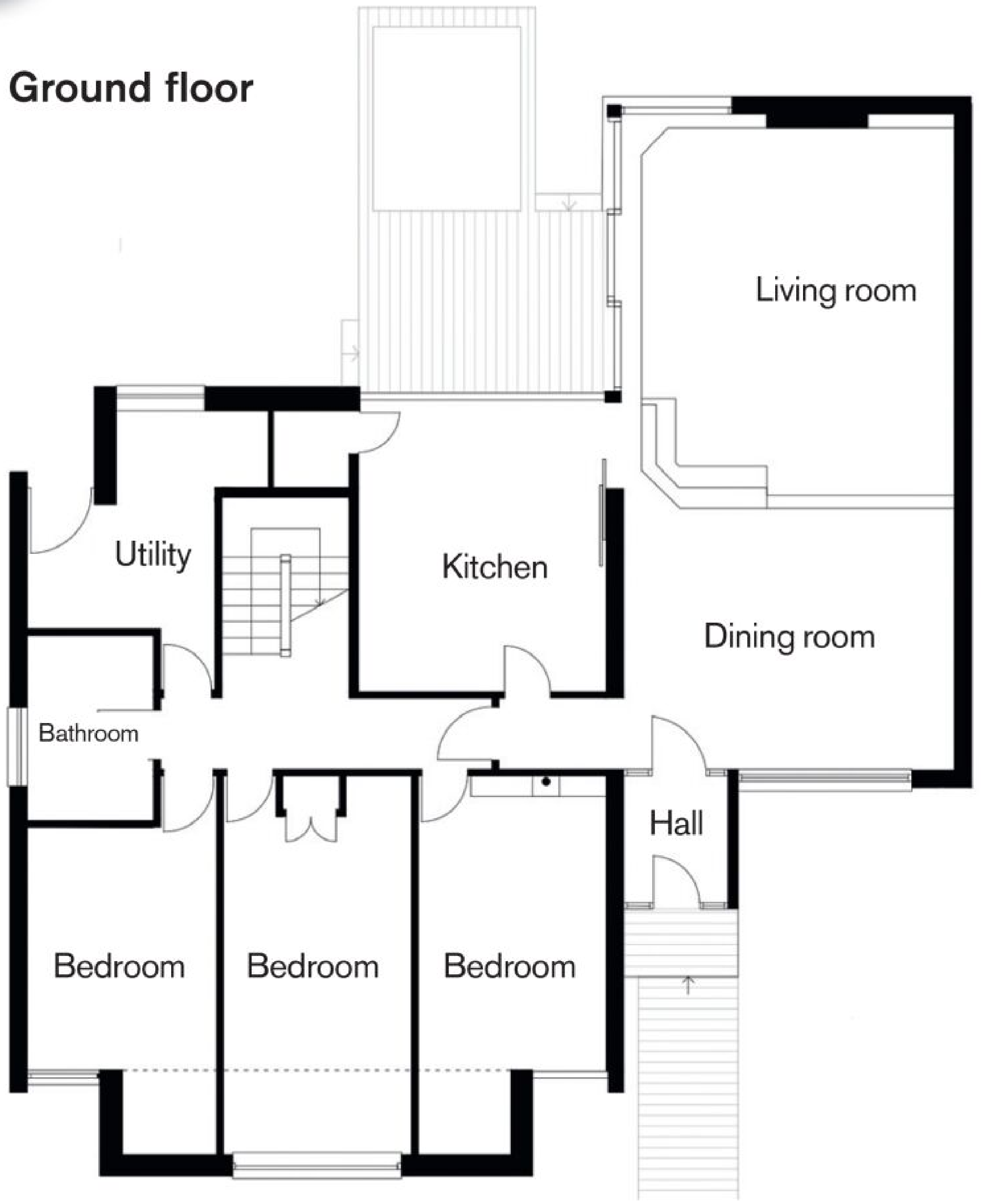
Big picture detailing…

The success of this finished project hinged on perfecting the details to create a seamless and cohesive building design. This is relatively straightforward if you're just adding a standard extension to the back of a house, but more intense when it also involves improving existing structural elements and materials. Thankfully, Allan and Lia got it right; the view of the house from the street shows just how successful the project was. "I'm really pleased that, when you see it, there are no longer these big concrete roof tiles or large-scale paving slabs," says Neil. "No, you see a much more sympathetic building with nicely proportioned roof tiles that blend in with the neighbours. The dormer is a refined addition, too. The street-facing improvement was one of the main aims of the brief and that has worked out very well."

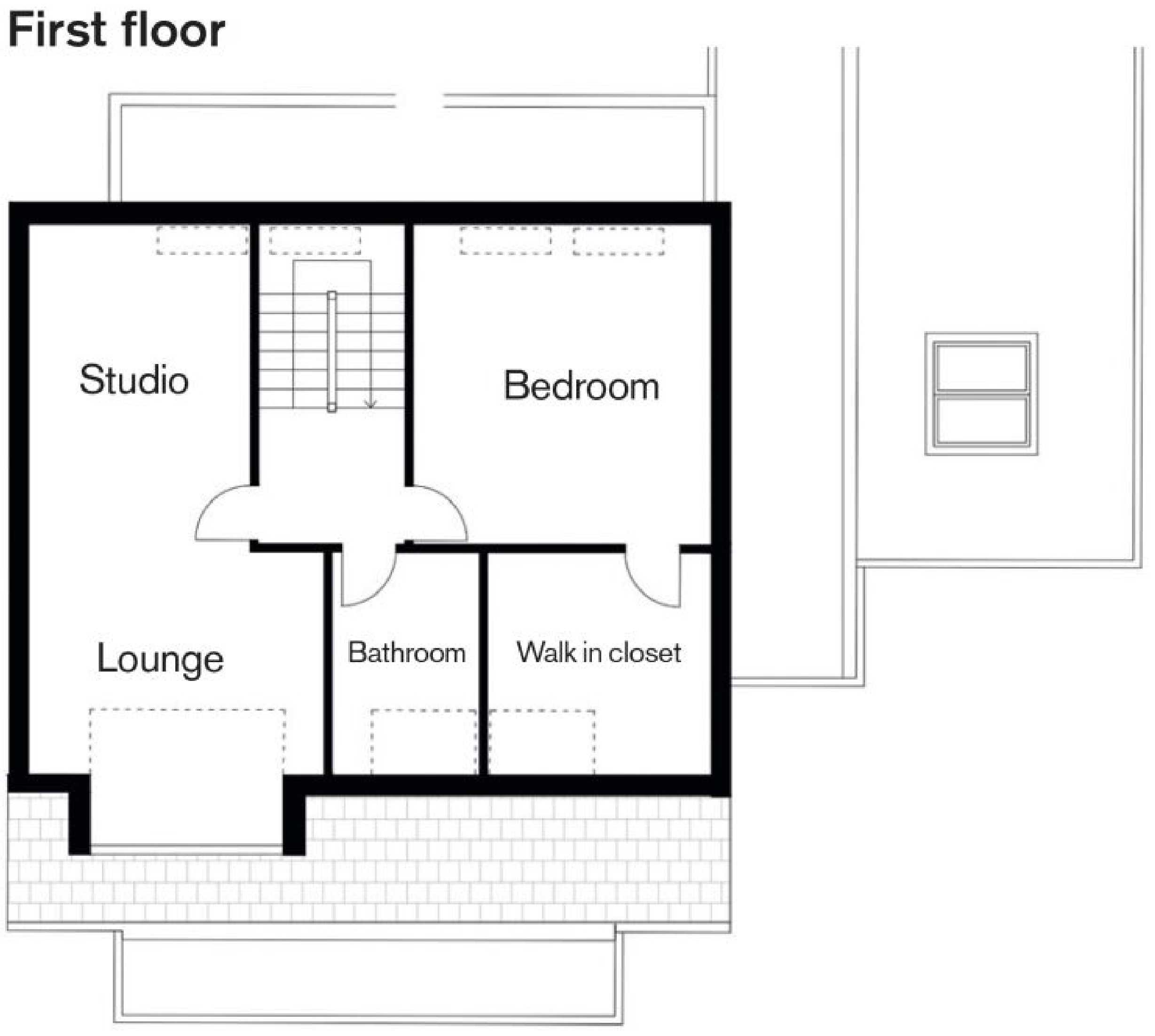
New roof tiles

Floor plans

Ground floor



First floor



TOTAL BUILD COST BREAKDOWN

Elements	Cost m²	Cost %	Total cost
Preliminaries	£150	12%	£30,000
Foundations	£110	11%	£26,400
External walls & windows	£90	9%	£21,600
Roof structure & covering	£95	10%	£22,800
Internal walls	£30	3%	£7,200
Floor, wall & ceiling finishes	£75	8%	£18,000
Joinery & fittings	£175	17%	£42,000
Plumbing & heating	£40	4%	£9,600
Electrics	£40	4%	£9,600
Decorating	£90	9%	£21,600
External Works	£130	13%	£31,200
Grand total			**£240,000**

Note: The costs shown here reflect the original prices for materials, labour and services at the time this project was undertaken. As a general guide, inflation in the construction market runs at about 3%-4% per annum.

Useful contacts

ARCHITECT **TAP Architects** 01315 553824 taparchitects.co.uk ENGINEER **PWD Consultant Engineers** 01414 735280 www.pwdconsultants.co.uk BUILDER **Cramond Renovations** 01316 599193 www.cramondrenovations.com LARCH CLADDING **Russwood** 01540 673648 www.russwood.co.uk POND & LANDSCAPING **Water Gems Landscape Contractor** 01313 178585 www.watergems.co.uk WINDOWS (RATIONEL) **ADW Window Suppliers** 01236 780022 www.adwscotland.co.uk ROOF TILES **Marley** 01283 722330 www.marley.co.uk KITCHEN **Riddle & Coghill** 01315 556555 www.riddleandcoghill.co.uk KITCHEN TILES **Baked Tile Company** 01792 439239 www.bakedtiles.co.uk LIGHTING **Catalog** 01312 252888 www.cataloginteriors.com FLOORING **Edinburgh Carpet & Flooring Warehouse** 01315 573771 www.edinburghcarpetwarehouse.co.uk **Russwood** 01540 673648 www.russwood.co.uk STOVE (FIREMAKER) **Kinross Stove Centre** 01577 861440 www.kinrossstovecentre.co.uk BATHROOM TILES **Solus** 01217 530777 www.solusceramics.com BASIN **Victoria Plum** www.victoriaplum.com

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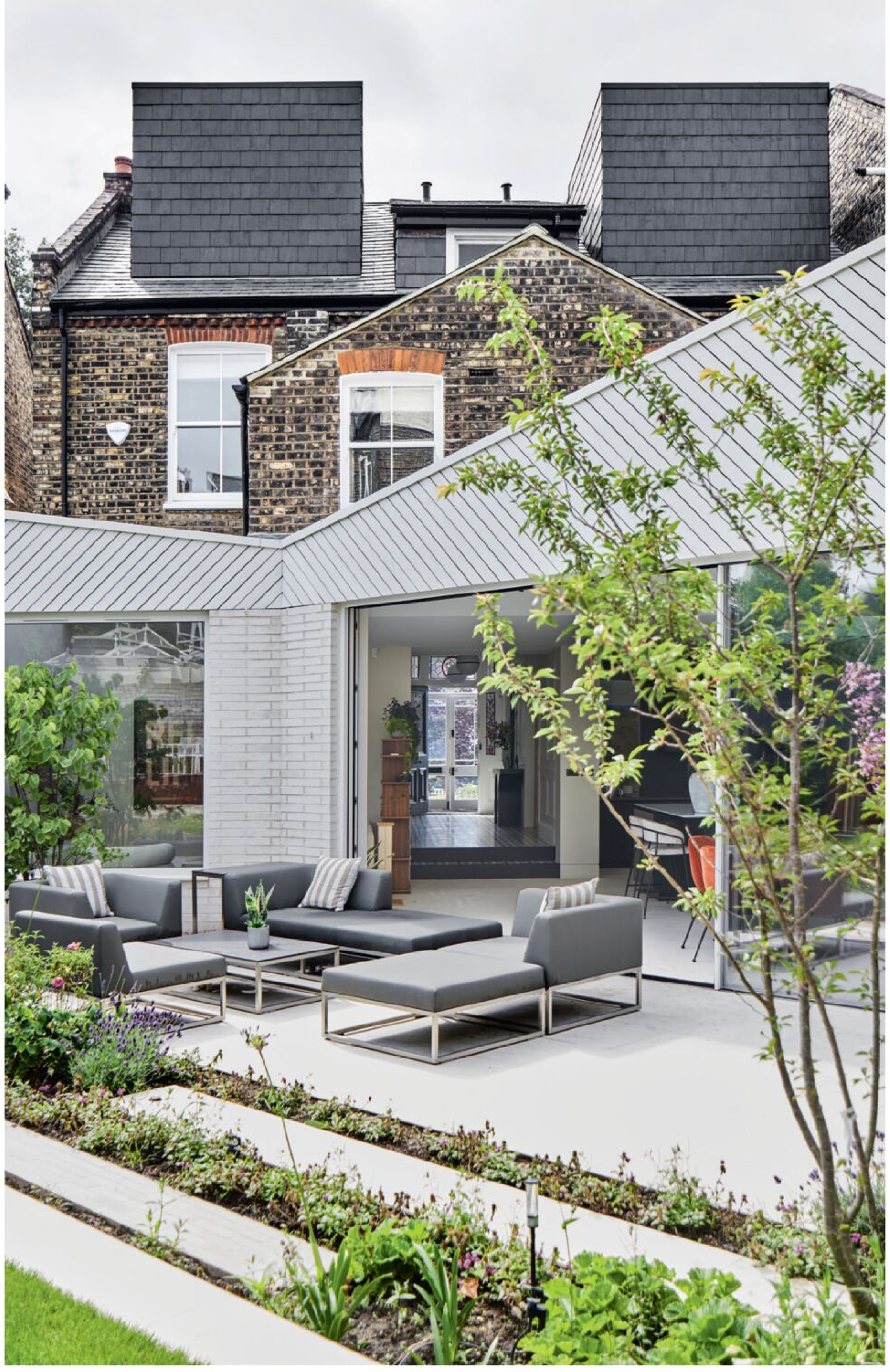


Caroline & Alan Burns' clever renovation and extension recreated their Aussie lifestyle in a north-facing London home

WORDS **ALEXANDRA PRATT** PHOTOS **DAN GLASSER**

For Caroline and Alan Burns, the journey to creating their dream home began during the pandemic. "It was in the Covid lockdown and Australia was shut," says Caroline, who arrived in London from Australia 20 years ago. She stayed in the UK to forge a career and marry Alan, with whom she now has three children. The couple were deliberating whether to move to Australia to enjoy the alfresco lifestyle or remain in London, with all its opportunities and culture, when the pandemic struck. "We worried about where we might go and what we might do, but then thought it'd be better just to live for the moment," she says.

That decision led the couple to make an offer on a property in North London, which they'd walked past many times. The house's hilltop location, in a conservation area, offers an enviable views across the city. The generous proportions of the double-fronted Victorian home impressed Caroline, too – the high ceilings and large rooms make an strong first impression as soon as you walk through the front door. "The scale of it! I've never seen an entrance and hallway like it," says Caroline, who fell in love with the house's potential, despite its terrible condition. There were linoleum floors, a dilapidated lean-to and soundproofed rooms for the musical former tenant. The biggest drawback for sun-loving Caroline was that the rear of the house faced north, and the boundary to the west was blocked by a neighbouring gable. "I knew that if we were going to stay here, we'd need more light," she says.

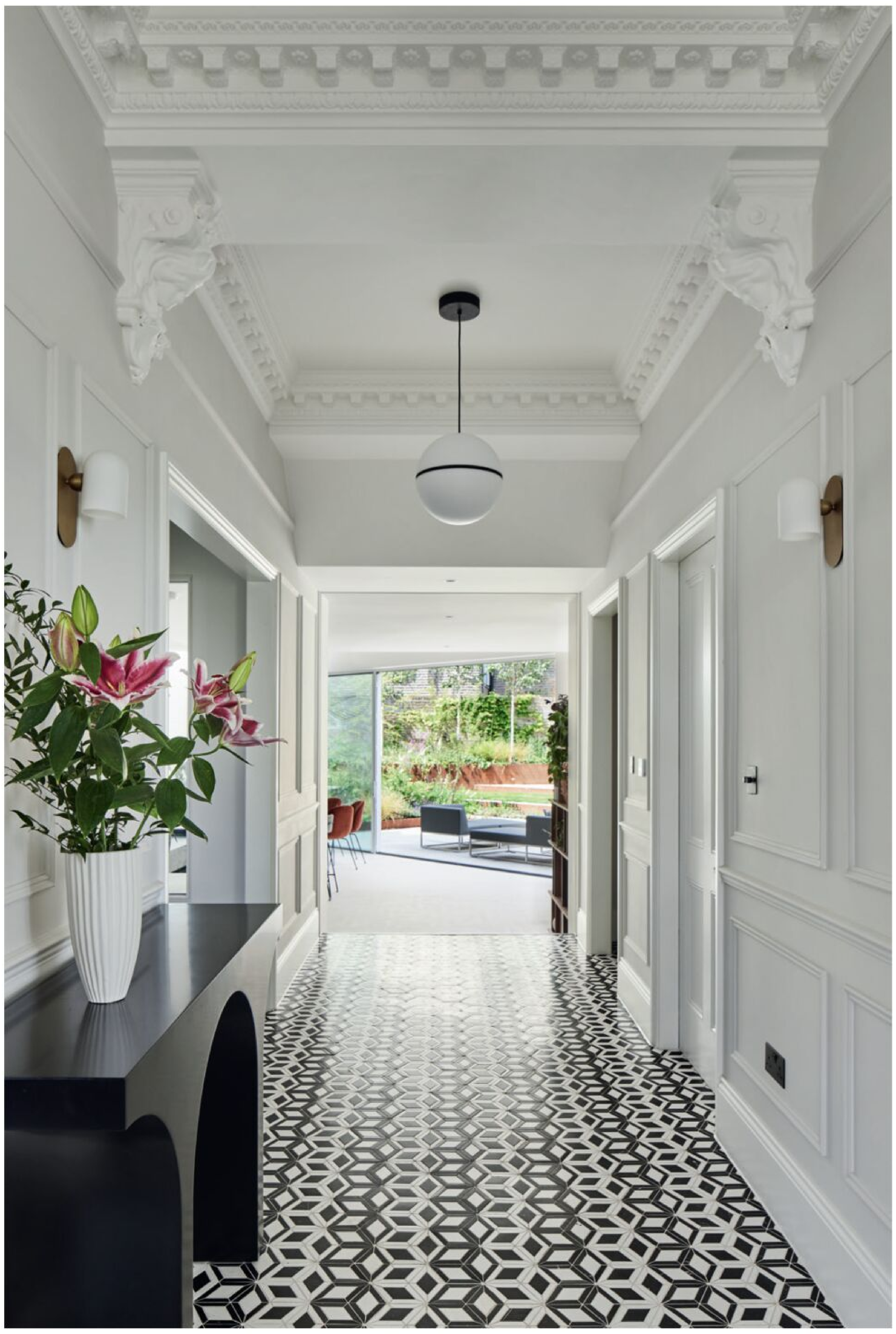
Dream team

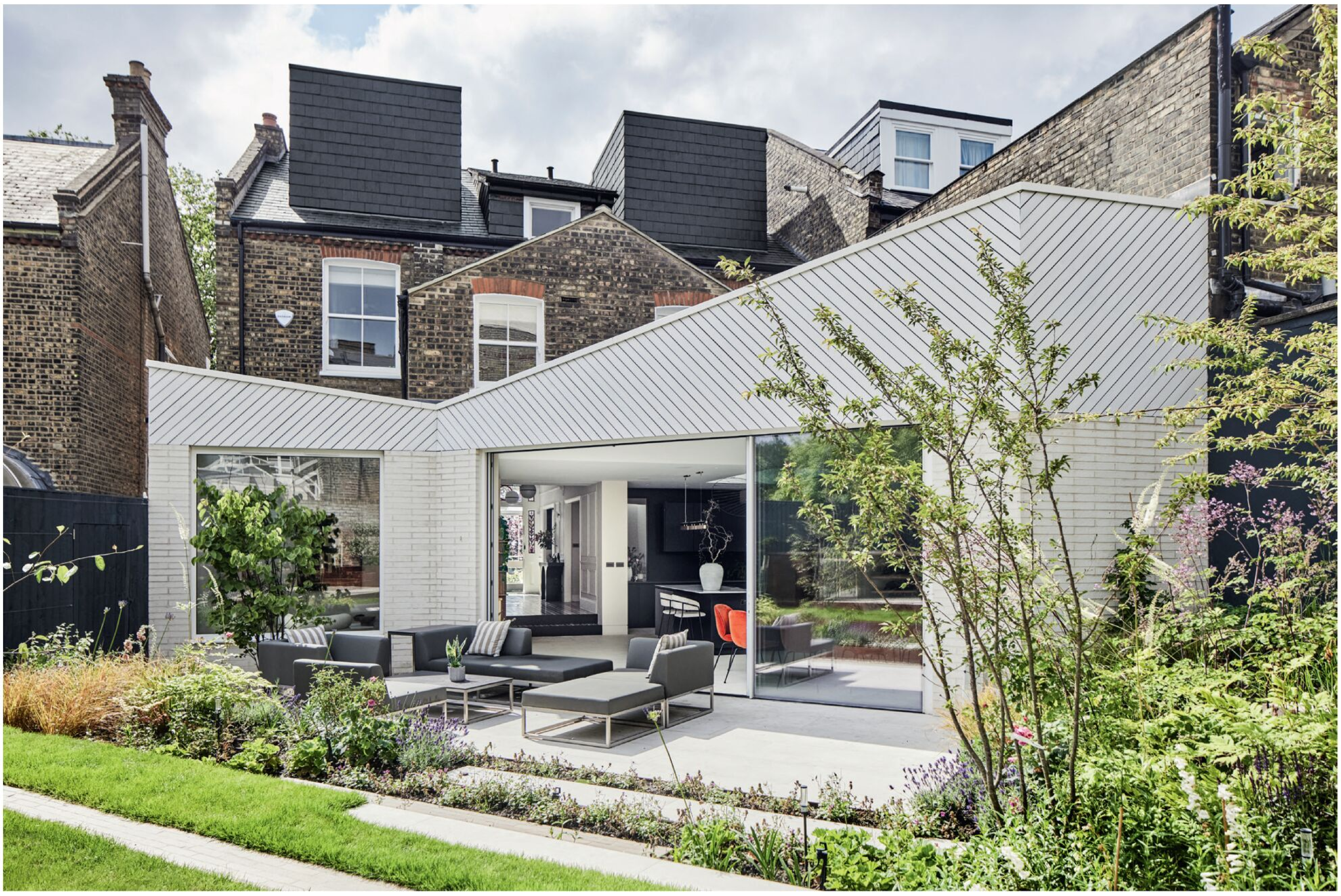
Caroline and Alan's desire to flood the property with sunshine formed the basis of the design brief they gave to their architect, Andrew Mulroy of Mulroy Architects. "The Australian way of life is all about letting light in," says Caroline. "I needed a beachy, summery feel. I also wanted a house large enough to entertain. I have a big family, and I wanted a kitchen that forms the heart of the house, with enough space for everyone." Andrew and his team rose to the challenge, crafting plans for a renovation and extensions that showcase clever solutions to the building's unique challenges. "It's a beautiful home that embodies the spirit of Australia and London," says Andrew. "Our ambitious design maximises views, floods the house with light and introduces open living areas for entertaining."

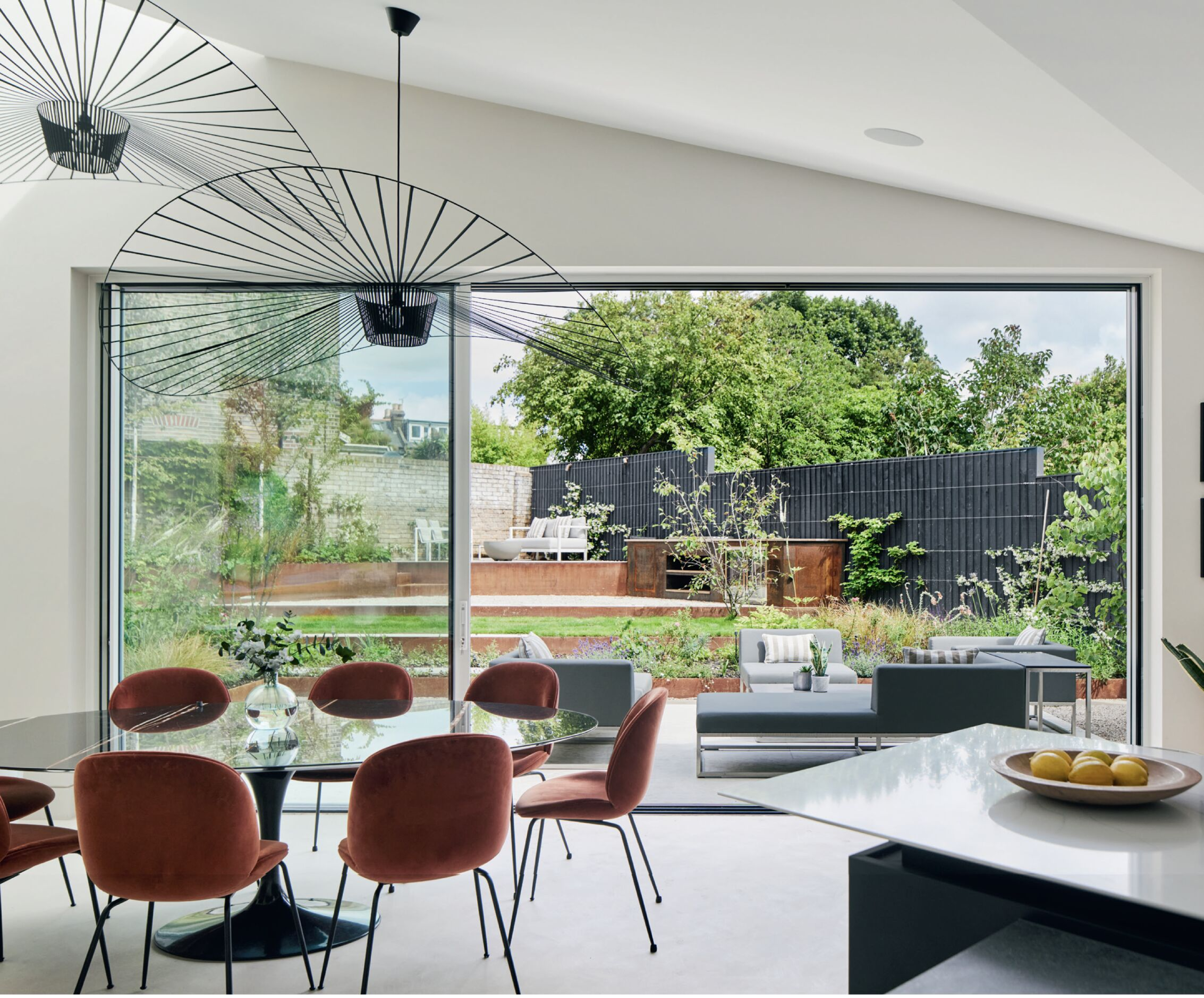
With a reliable main contractor in Keenan Construction, the project ran smoothly. However, party wall issues did slow progress somewhat at the beginning. A neighbouring property that is divided into flats created some issues around communication and logistics,

Right: By moving the staircase to the side of the building, Caroline and Alan established a clear sight line from the front of the house to the back garden

Below & left: The unusual asymmetrical extension is clad in sustainable larch timber and architectural masonry, which comprises up to 40% recycled materials







Above & right: The sloping ceiling in the extension is angled upwards, creating a sense of the space opening up; a design requirement that Caroline had specified in the brief

FACT FILE

NAMES Alan & Caroline Burns

OCCUPATIONS Chief financial officer & HR director

LOCATION North London

TYPE OF PROJECT Renovation & extension

STYLE Victorian, with contemporary rear & basement extensions

PROJECT ROUTE Architect designed & project managed, main contractor hired for construction

CONSTRUCTION METHOD Timber frame extension to masonry property

BOUGHT March 2021

HOUSE SIZE 294m²

PLOT SIZE 392m²

PROJECT COST £1,736,000

PROJECT COST PER M² £5,905

BUILDING WORK COMMENCED October 2021

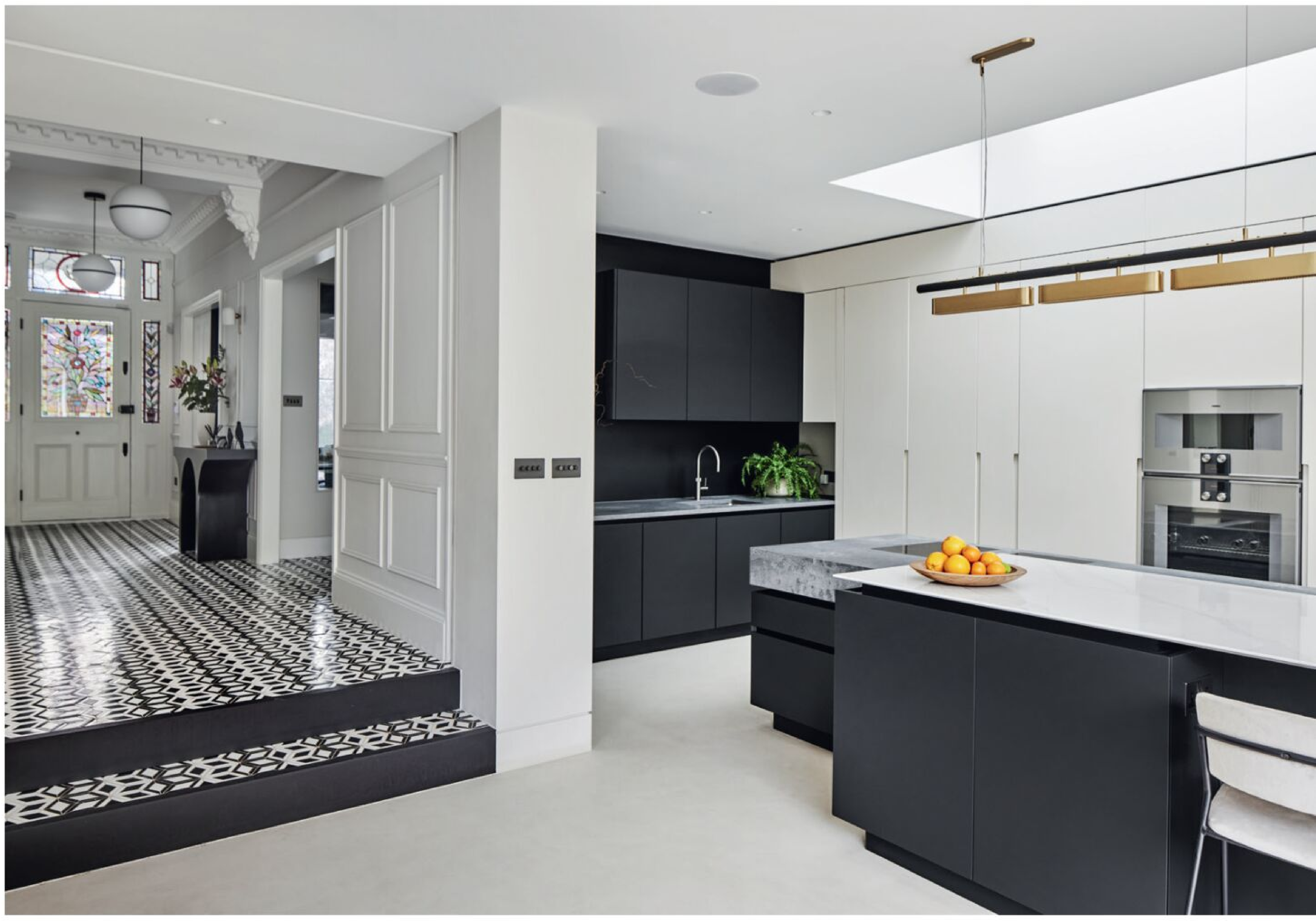
BUILDING WORK TOOK 72 weeks

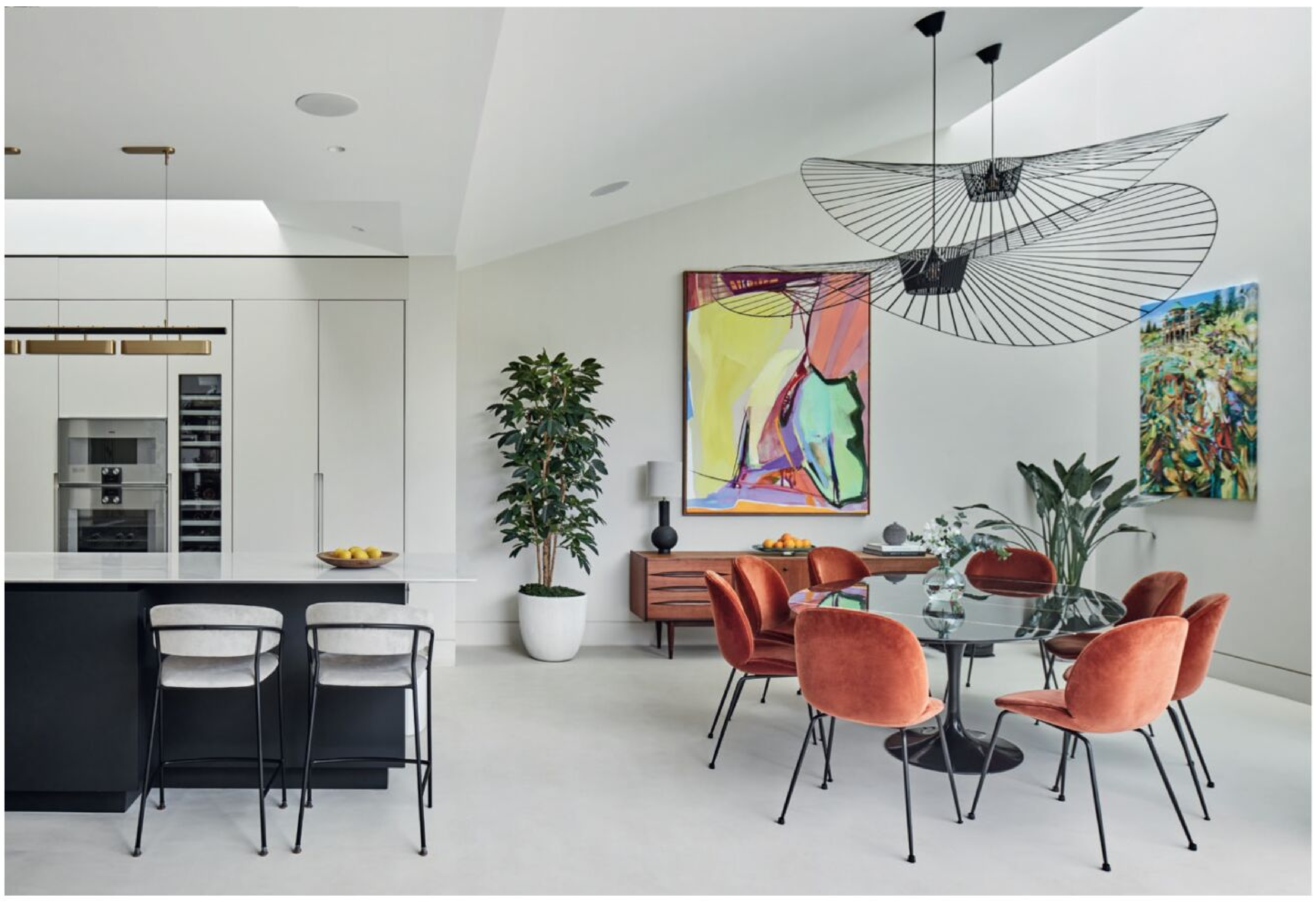
which were all, ultimately, resolved. "They couldn't stop us, but it did cost an extra £30,000 to sort out," says Caroline. Although these challenges created some stressful moments, the build was an overwhelmingly positive experience with no low points. "I was excited throughout the project," she recalls. "While Alan dealt with the insurance, builders and planners, I dealt with the good stuff; design, interiors and vision," Caroline says. "It really helped that our main contractor, Keenan Construction, are brilliant at what they do. They were always happy to find a solution to any issues that cropped up along the way."

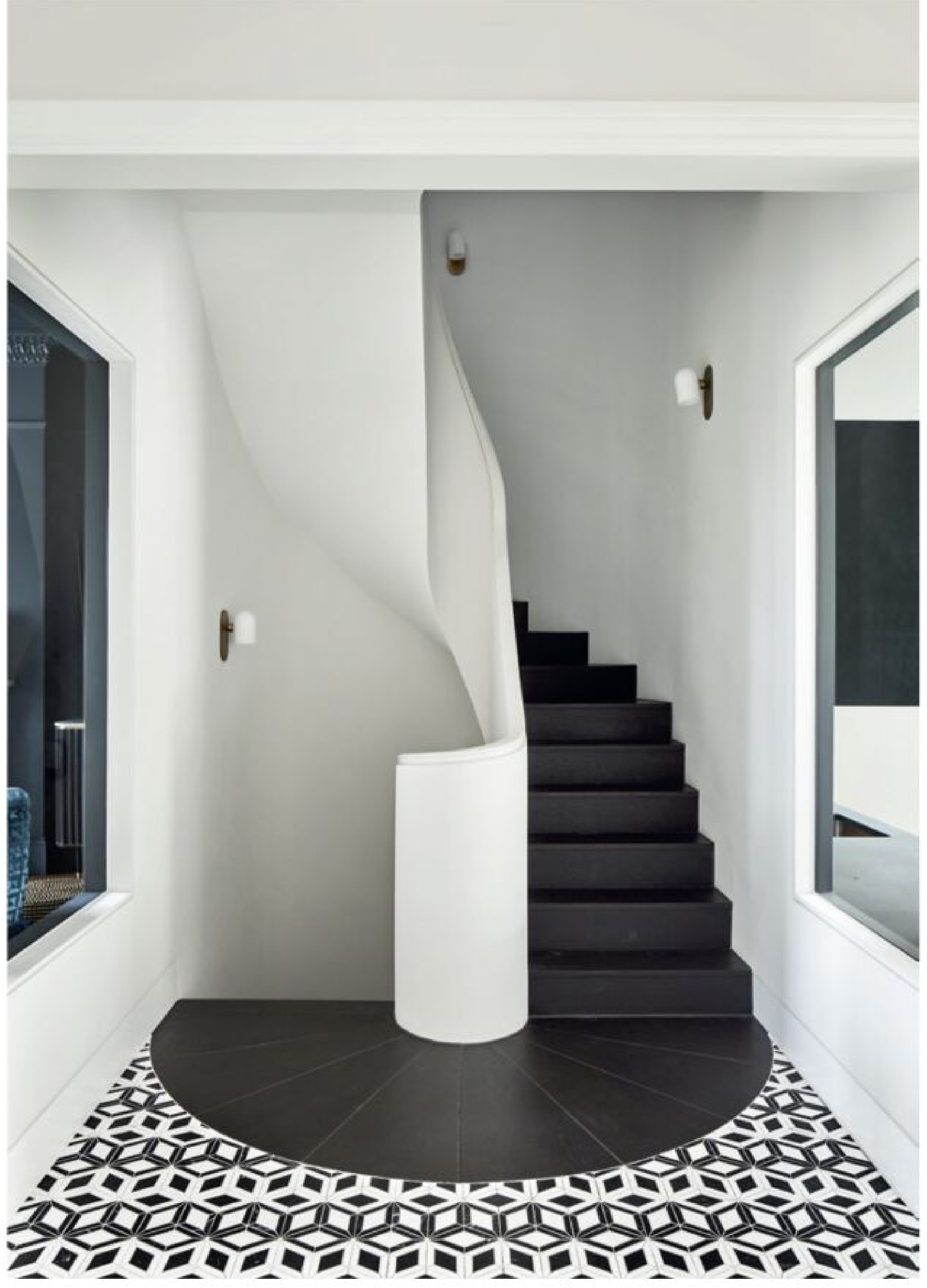
Design overhaul

The biggest changes Alan and Caroline made to the house was clearing the existing lean-to extension to make way for a new rear addition. The lightweight timber frame structure sits on the diagonal at 45° facing the eastern light, rather than the building next door. This design extends views across the garden and cleverly navigates the 3m planning rule, which limits the size of single-story rear additions on semi-detached or terraced homes. Now reaching 9m from the original Victorian property, the extension also conceals the blank wall of the neighbouring addition. As well as helping to revitalise the ground floor overall, the new extension makes the garden feel bigger and brighter by maximising the diagonal space.

Below right: Designed by Mulroy Architects and crafted by Keenan Construction, the new bespoke staircase connects all four levels of the property







Inside, a tall rooflight sits above the dining table, capturing sunshine and highlighting the interesting geometry of the extension. Although the overhead glazing is fixed and does not open, it successfully bounces pockets of light around the entire space. Steps from the original part of the house lead down into the new zone, which thanks to 4m-high ceilings, accommodates a dramatic kitchen and dining space that works to draw attention away from the neighbour's wall next door. "All we can see is sky and trees," says Caroline. "It's very clever."

Inviting sunshine inside

Light determined other elements of the redesign, too, including the addition of unusual north-facing extensions on the roof. When viewed face on, these structures appear to be windowless, but actually have large openable rooflights that capture southern sunshine and invite fresh air inside, ensuring the top rooms remain bright and cool. An unexpected bonus is the full-height wardrobe space they provide, which is so often hard to find in attics.

Above: The original parts of the house retain some period features, which are highlighted through the careful use of colour and pattern in the decorative scheme

The significant layout changes made to the ground floor were also dictated by Alan and Caroline's goal to bring in as much natural light as possible. The main alteration was the couple's decision to relocate the central staircase to the side of the floorplan. This not only opened up a stunning view from the front door, through the house and into the garden, but it freed up an incredible 30% more living space, all within the guidelines of planning policies. This allowed the utility room and WC to be repositioned in the centre of the floorplan, a concept Caroline loves. "Those rooms don't need sun. That was a stroke of genius by the architects," she says.

Having found ways to make the back of the house feel sunny, the couple went one step further and decided to draw in more brightness from the south-facing front of the house. A series of new, internal windows invites light in, and provides a visual link that means Caroline can see her children, aged 15, 14 and 11, in the front reception room when she's in the rear open-plan area. "The incredible morning light from the south reaches the back and I can see the kids, even though they're in a different room," she says.

A new basement adds further space to the already large home, but Caroline insists the family uses every inch of it. Before any excavation work could begin, a series of soil tests were conducted and trial pits dug out to assess the surrounding foundations. The subterranean space is fully tanked and has a sump pump to ensure it remains dry, despite the presence of a reservoir close by. "The digging out created an absolute mud pit, but we were going all in for our forever home," says Caroline. "The space is very functional; we have a gym, a cinema room and space for our guests. It was my husband's idea – and thank goodness we did it," she says.

When it came to upgrading the property's heating system, though Caroline and Alan considered an air source heat pump,

ultimately, they decided against it on the grounds of cost and practicality. "In a house of this size, an air source heat pump would struggle to warm it sufficiently, and I really feel the cold!" says Caroline. "However, we do have underfloor heating throughout, and this gives a really nice, even spread of heat."

Planning the interiors

Caroline had a clear vision for the interior scheme and was adamant that her chosen finishes would create a visually interesting and elegant look. It was a brief that was challenging in its vagueness, but one that the couple's designers, Simpson & Voyle, exceeded. "I loved working with them, they made the job so pleasurable," says Caroline. "They have done amazing things."

Fortunately, when Caroline and Alan purchased the property, many of the original Victorian features remained in place. Where possible, Caroline decided to retain these period details and refurbish elements, such as the fireplaces, as necessary. "I wanted to keep the coving and the ceilings, too, but they disintegrated as soon as the builders touched them," she says.

One of the biggest challenges was bringing old and new together in a way that showcases the best of both. The entire house benefits from new tailormade joinery, including all the bedrooms. Mulroy Architects designed the staircase, which connects all levels of the property. Timber flooring is laid in most of the rooms, with the exception of the hallway, which features a striking patterned floor comprising black and white marble tiles. In the kitchen, the micro-cement floor is durable and practical. The cabinets are pale, in keeping with the light, spacious feeling Caroline wanted. "I considered resin for the floor, but it's not textured enough."

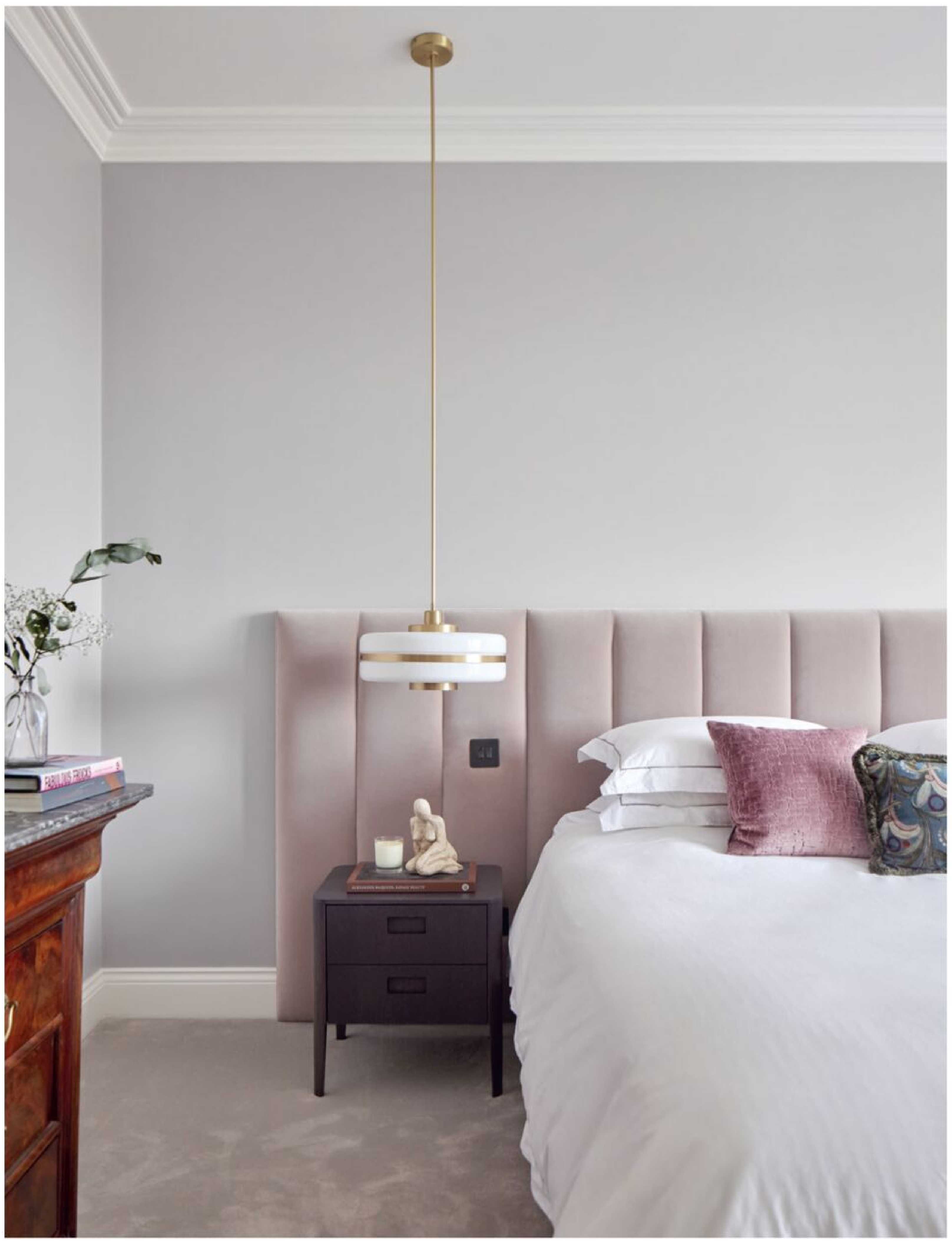
Happy to be pushed out of her comfort zone of neutral colours and pale wood finishes, Caroline worked with designers Angela Simpson and Laura Voyle to inject colour and pattern into the home. These elements accentuate the building's original features,

WE LEARNED...

TRUST THE PROCESS. Rather than fixating on each detail, focus on the finished vision. For example, I initially worried that the black tiles, furniture, and fixtures would make the hallway feel too dark. However, the designers saw the bigger picture: with light walls, ceilings, and natural sunlight, the hallway became bright and welcoming, not overwhelmingly dark as I'd feared.

BE MINDFUL OF THE BUDGET. I think I must be the only client who goes shopping with a laptop and spreadsheets.

IF YOU LOOK HARD ENOUGH, you can find things for the right budget. For example, I wanted a beautiful brass tap. I'm so glad I did it, but I had to downgrade the kids' taps to get it!



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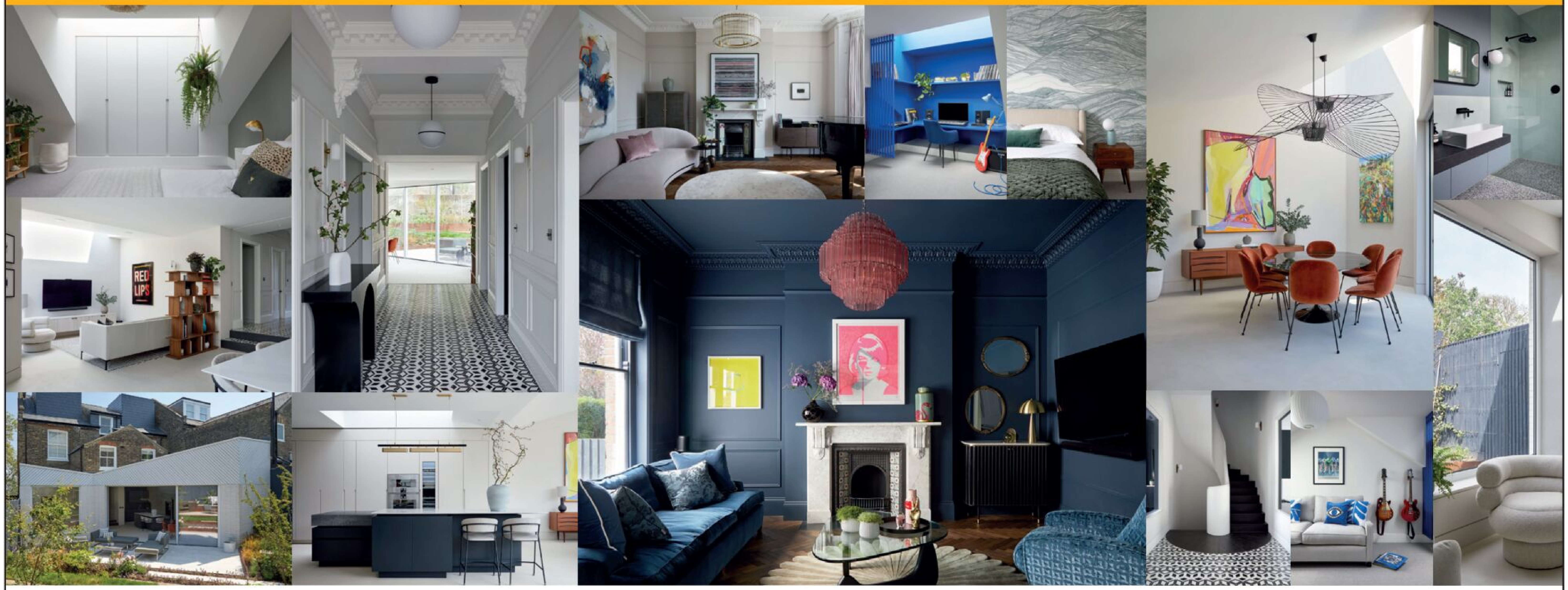

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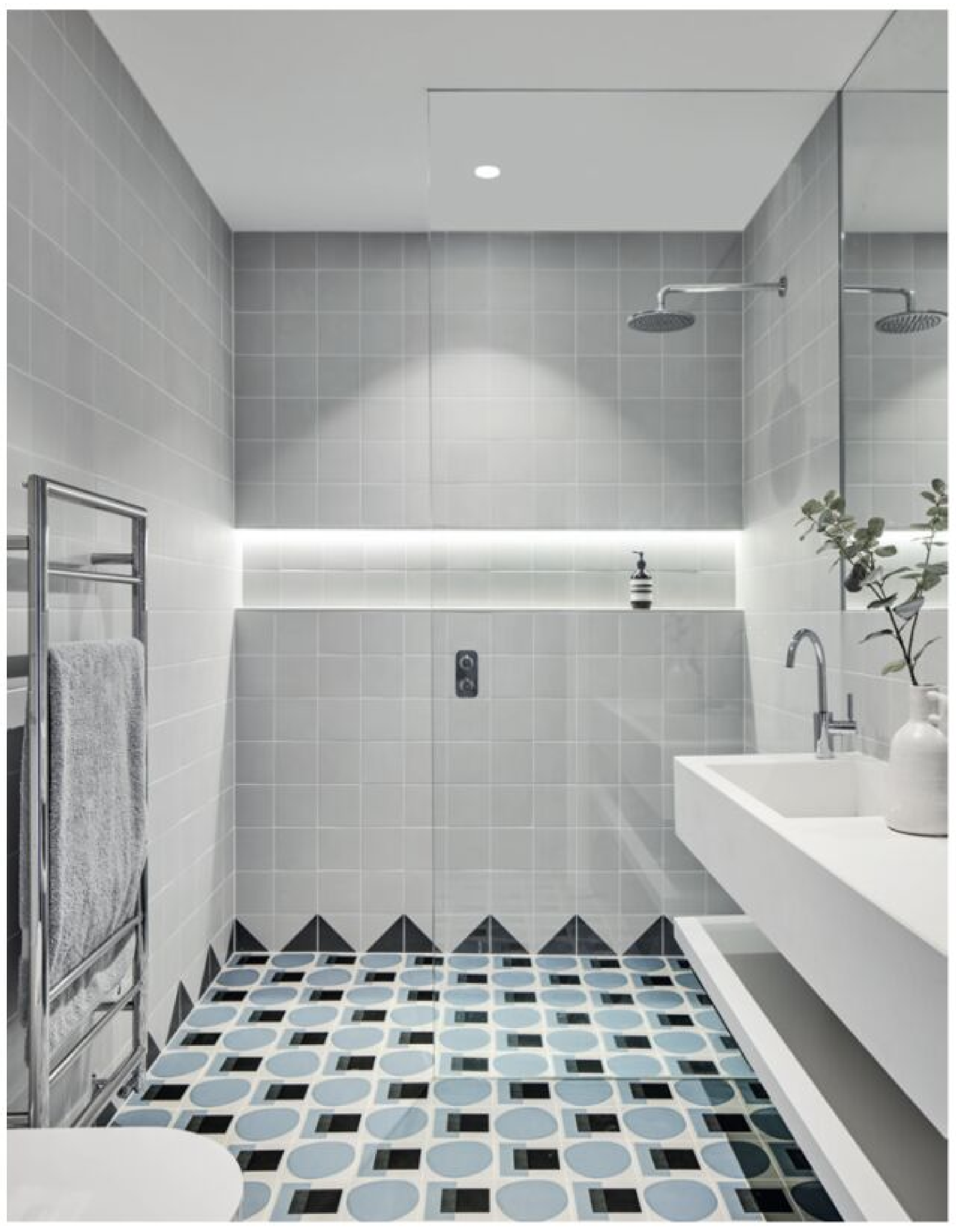


Above: A double shower, natural marble and plenty of space give the bathroom a luxurious feel

Left & right: Using different tiling styles in the ensuites has given each space an individual feel

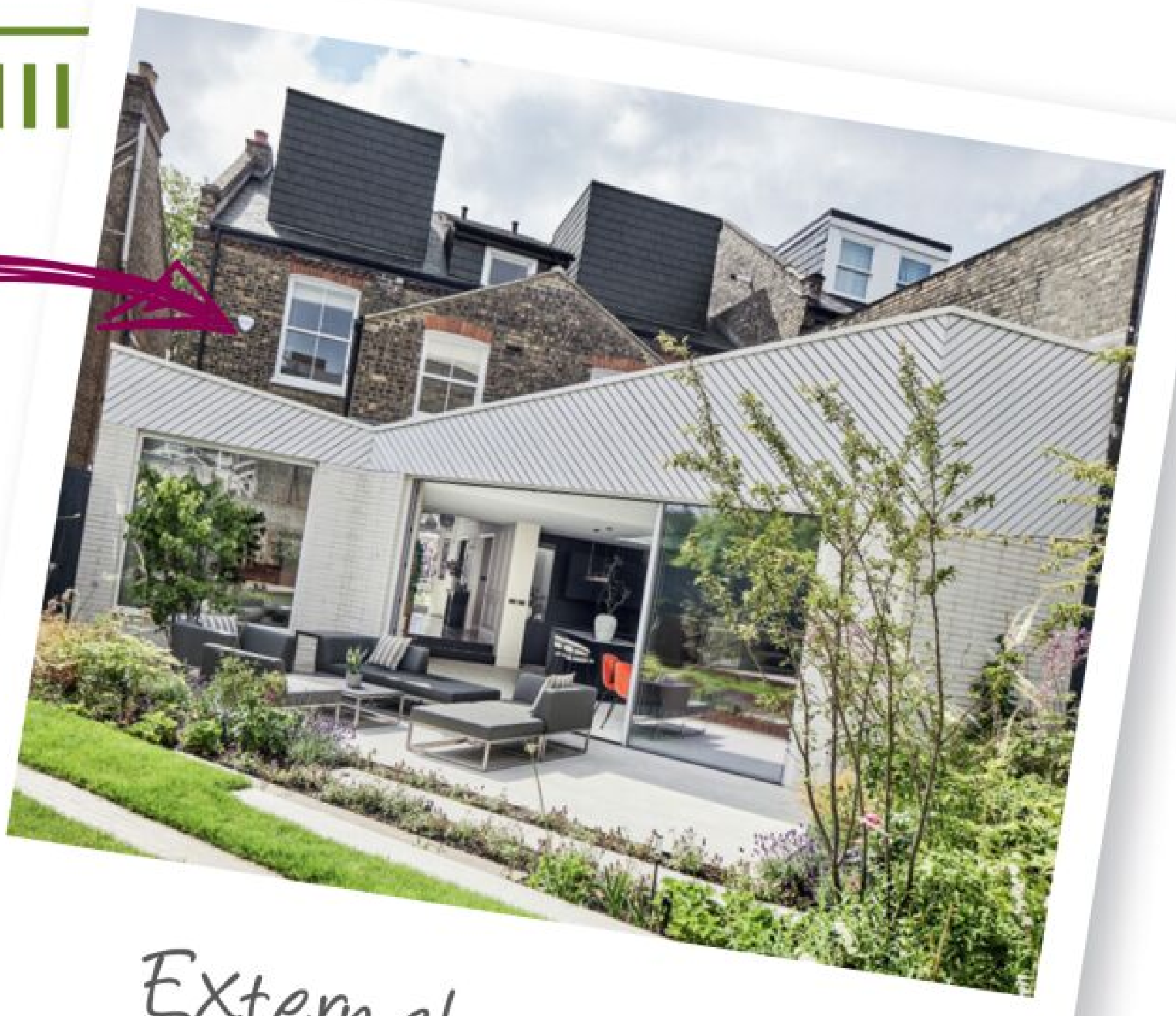
including high ceilings, ornate cornicing and sculptural lines. While Caroline kept and reimagined some furniture, including reupholstering some pieces, she also embraced the trend for high/low design. This means money was spent on quality, investment items, or those that will be used frequently, with more affordable high street buys in less critical areas. Caroline made savings on furniture in the children's and guest rooms, while the family sofas and the lighting system, which came from Astro Lighting, are top of the range. The basins in the bathroom were also made bespoke by marble and granite suppliers, Pena.

With the family now happily settled into their light-filled home, has this colossal 18-month-long project improved everyday life? "It definitely has!" says Caroline. "It's a very easy house to live in and everyone is happy here. The kids spend less time in their bedrooms, and we can live as a family with a busy social life. As I stand at the back doors, looking out, I can't believe we live here."

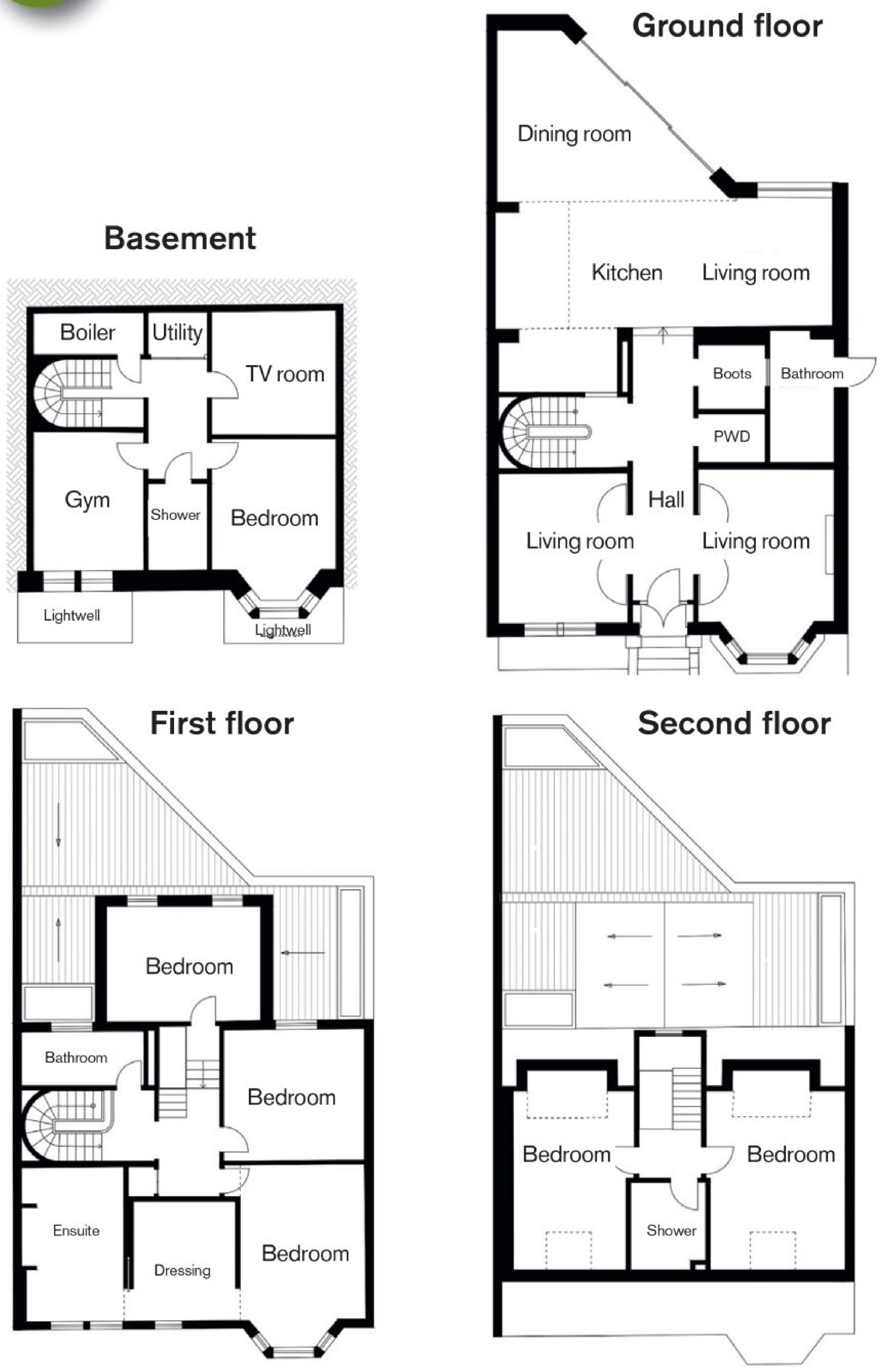
closer look

Wow-factor finishes...

Thanks to the contemporary exterior finishes chosen by Caroline and Alan, the rear extension stands visually distinct from the original property's traditional brickwork. The pale colours of the materials palette – sustainable Siberian larch and shot-blasted Forticrete bricks – greatly appealed to the couple. The blocks comprise of up to 40% of recycled materials, offering a 25% reduction in embodied carbon (that's the same amount that's used to manufacture a product) per tonne, against traditional concrete mixes. The sleek proportions of the long format Forticrete bricks provide an eye-catching contrast to the conventionally sized Victorian units, too.


External materials

Floor plans



TOTAL BUILD COST BREAKDOWN

Elements	Cost m²	Cost %	Total cost
Preliminaries	£442	7%	£130,000
Basement dig	£850	14%	£250,000
Plumbing (incl UFH)	£340	6%	£100,000
Electrics	£153	2%	£45,000
Roof, rooflights, dormers etc	£221	4%	£65,000
Stairs	£51	1%	£15,000
External walls	£170	3%	£50,000
Windows & external doors	£102	2%	£30,000
Internal walls	£54	1%	£16,000
Internal doors	£85	1%	£25,000
Plastering, painting, floor installation, ceilings etc	£510	9%	£150,000
Joinery	£238	4%	£70,000
Extension structure	£136	2%	£40,000
Kitchen & bathrooms	£340	6%	£100,000
Professional fees	£680	12%	£200,000
Decorating & furnishings	£850	14%	£250,000
Miscellaneous costs	£680	12%	£200,000
Grand total			**£1,736,000**

Note: The costs shown here reflect the original prices for materials, labour and services at the time this project was undertaken. As a general guide, inflation in the construction market runs at about 3%-4% per annum.

Useful contacts

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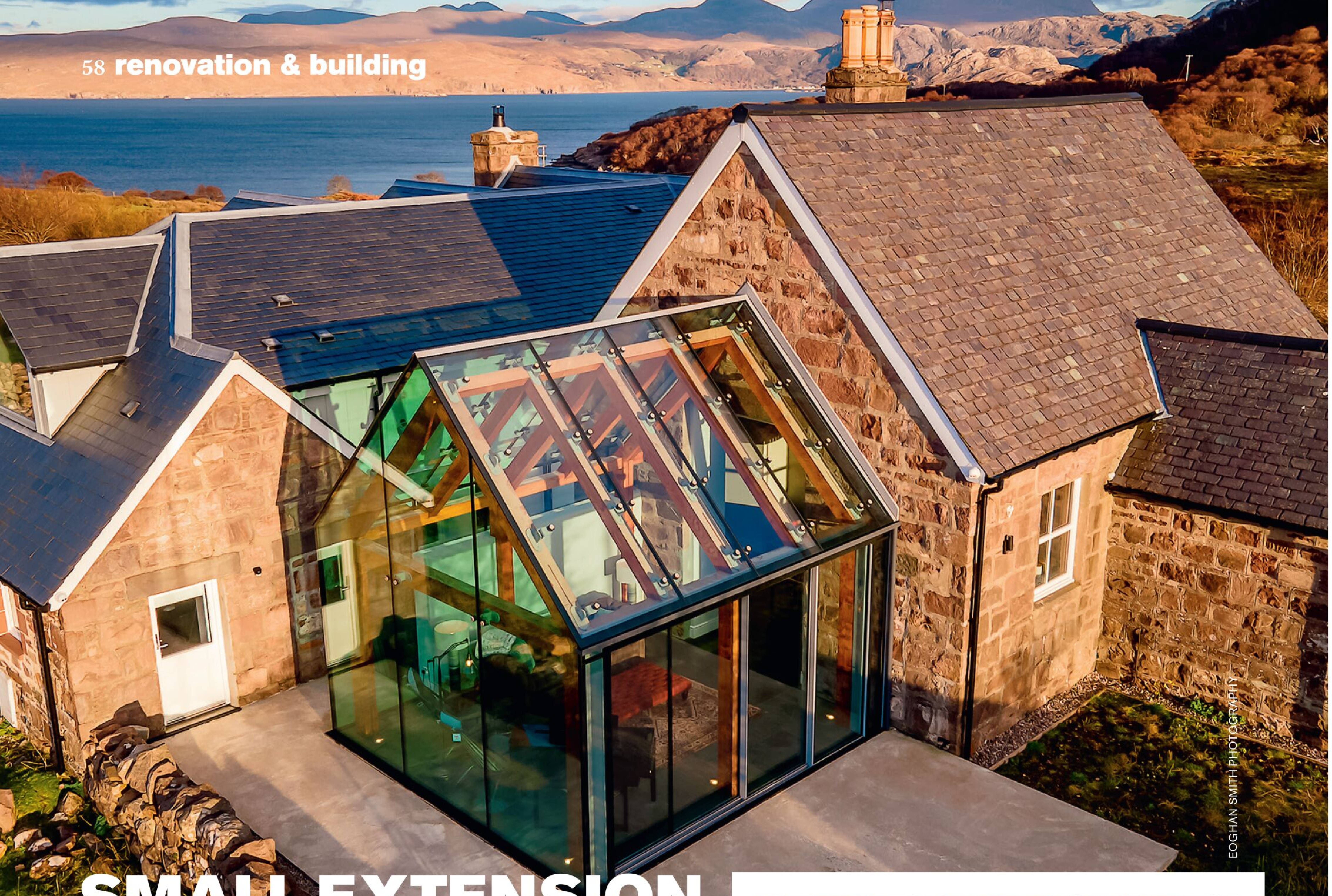
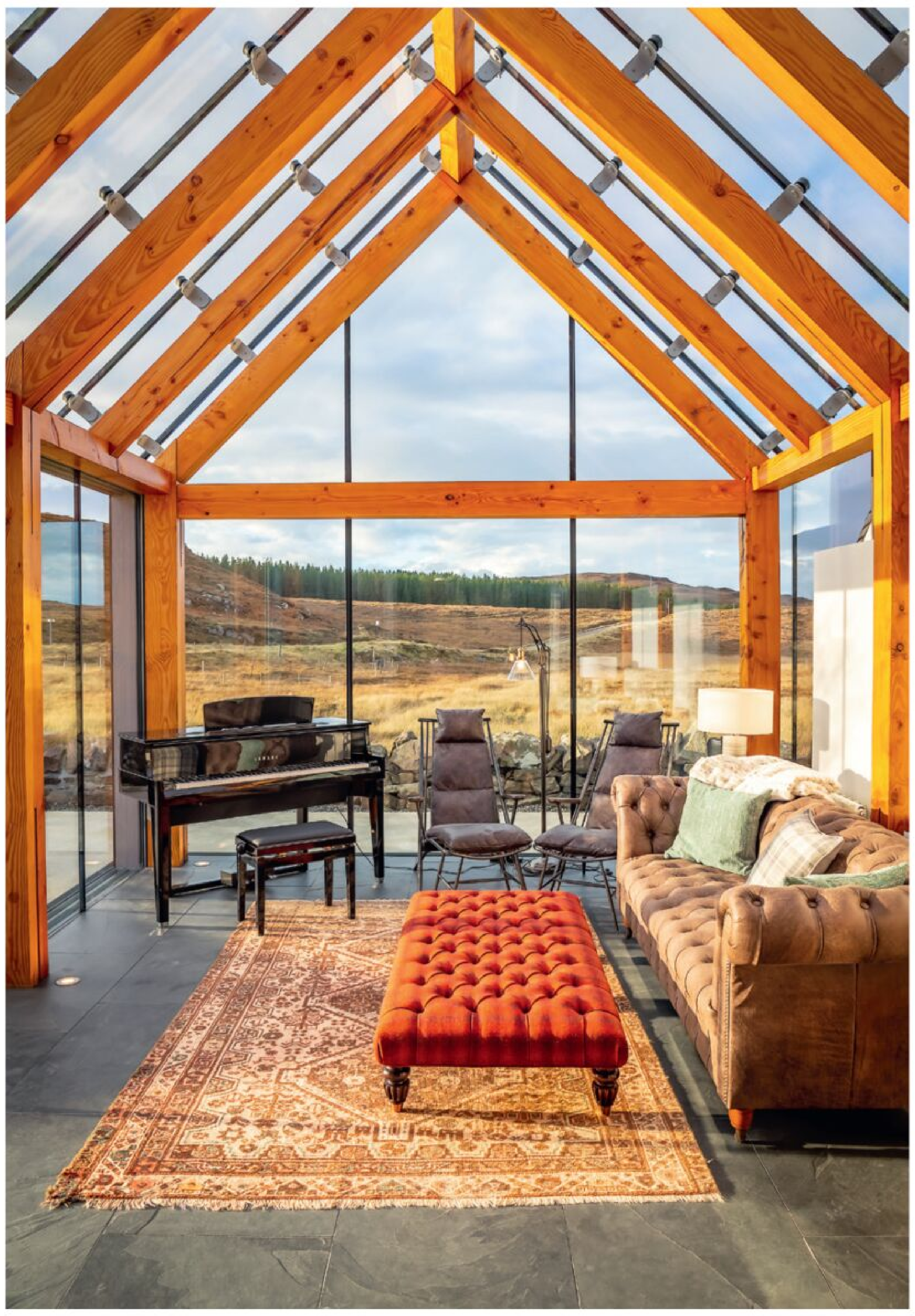


SMALL EXTENSION BIG IMPACT

With clever planning, even the most modest of additions can have transformative effects to improve your home's design and layout. Lindsay Blair takes a look at how to get it right

When thinking about extending your home, it's tempting to imagine large, sprawling additions that add generously to the footprint and give you ample room to play with. However, bigger is not always better. A carefully thought-out build that's more modest – say 20m^2 or less, if we're to put a number on things – can drastically alter how your property looks, flows and the way it is used. "Small ground-floor alterations often create valuable additional space for home offices or informal living areas, for instance, significantly improving the home's functionality," says Robin Callister, creative director and senior architect at Urbanist Architecture.

So, by making what might seem like minimal gains in terms of metreage, but really considering what the space is used for and how it connects to the existing layout, you could improve your living arrangements. And all without impeding too much on the garden or other rooms. There are planning bonuses, too. Many small additions can be



Above & inset: This 16m^2 glass-and-timber extension provides architectural wow and practical space, as part of a complete renovation of three old school buildings into a family home. Blueprint Architecture designed the addition, which was realised using a glazed structure by Trombe and a kiln-dried Douglas fir frame by Carpenter Oak. The resulting living space takes advantage of incredible views over Loch Torridon simply achieved under permitted development (PD); but always check with your local authority, as this will depend on your property and location as well as the extent to which the house has previously been extended.

Unlocking potential

Sometimes large extensions negatively impact adjacent rooms, reducing natural light deeper into a floor plan or compromising views. A small build could be the solution to solving space and flow issues, while still achieving a feeling of openness and connection to the outdoors.

To assess what's possible, consider how you currently use your home, and how you want to improve this. You should evaluate current and future lifestyle requirements, list activities you want to accommodate, and consider the flow between areas and how they interact. "I encourage clients to consider how they'll use the spaces on both individual and family levels," says Robin. "A personalised approach ensures that every square metre is utilised effectively, even when extension possibilities are limited."

Think outside the box to ensure practical solutions. "I often see full-width extensions with a kitchen against one side, and perhaps an island in the middle, but the remaining floor plan is unusable. So, a space has been added at huge cost but isn't proving functional," says Matthew Wood, architect and director at MW Architects. "The classic side return often renders the existing rear living room dark and uninviting. There's no point adding 20m^2 of new space if you kill off 15m^2 of perfectly good existing floor area." Matthew suggests that, where space is at a premium, full-width glass doors can sometimes be unhelpful. "You can't really put any furniture in front of them," he says. "Sometimes creating a dining niche, for example, that has a window rather than a full-height glass door provides an opportunity to maximise the internal floor area and create dynamic usable space outside, too."

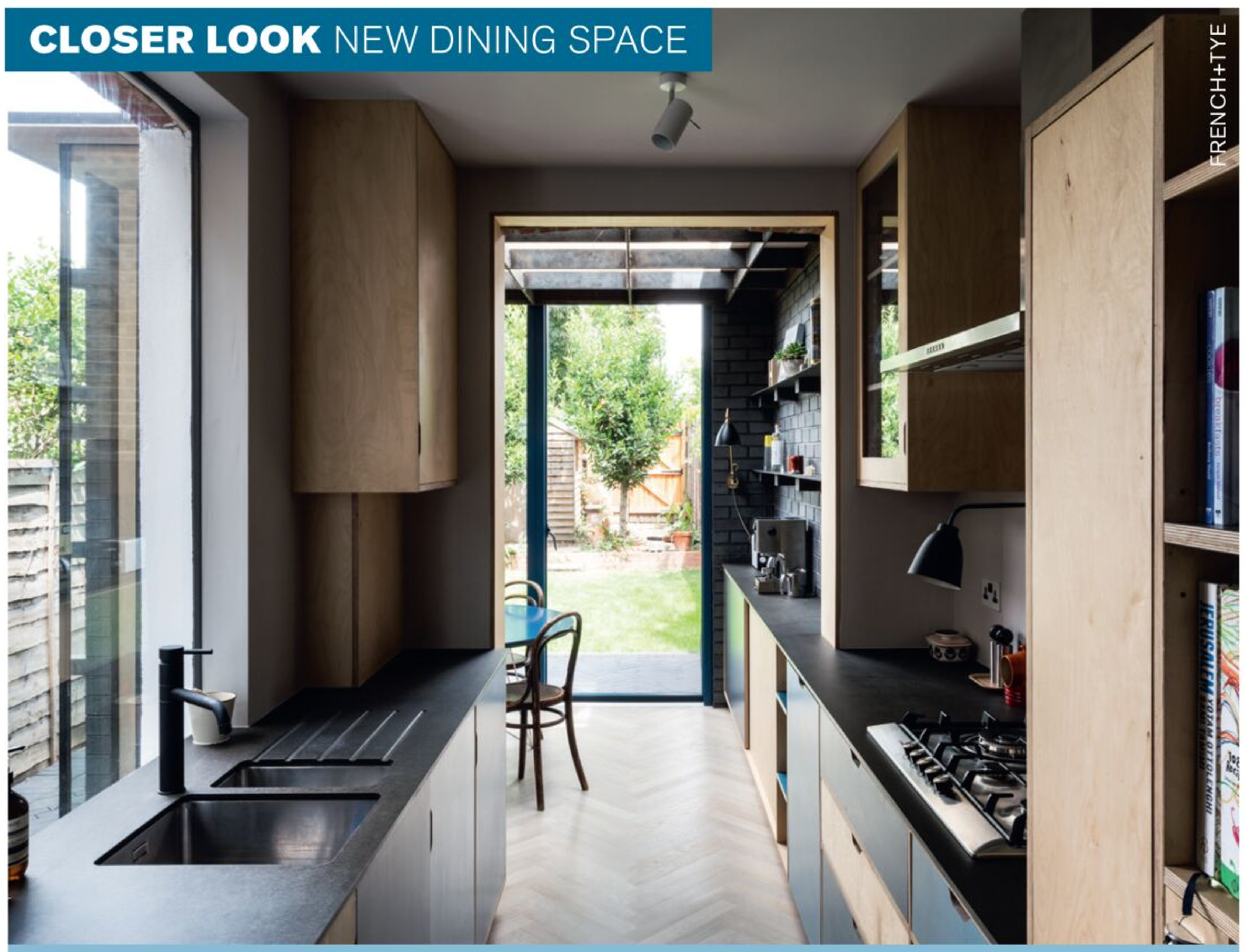
Useful additions

Typical small extensions may extend into the side return of a Victorian property, wrap around to increase both depth and width of the interior, or adopt a box-like design that maximises usable indoor space while enhancing the connection to the garden. "Simply enclosing a side alleyway can make a big impact for relatively minimal investment," Robin explains. "The key is maximising natural light penetration into the floor plan. By incorporating glazing thoughtfully, you can create bright, inviting spaces that blend neatly with the existing structure."

Alternatively, a small, projecting extension could form a dining area that connects to the kitchen and provides an inviting place to sit close to the garden. "Simple changes are often key to unlock a home's potential," says Matthew. "Built-in seating is very space-efficient in a dining zone, for instance, freeing up the rest of the room for expanding the kitchen or family areas. There's nothing worse than a redundant dining room in the middle of your floor plan, which never gets used and becomes a dumping ground."

You might be thinking of extending to create functional zones, such as a cloakroom, boot room or utility that won't need natural light. This kind of addition can free up valuable space elsewhere in your floor plan. Position such areas against or near to an external wall to minimise service runs (pipes, electrics etc), as this will reduce costs and complications. The best locations for these practical zones are often those of limited value, which won't detract from the flow of the floor plan. "They should be conveniently sited without disrupting main living areas or creating awkward transitions," says Robin.

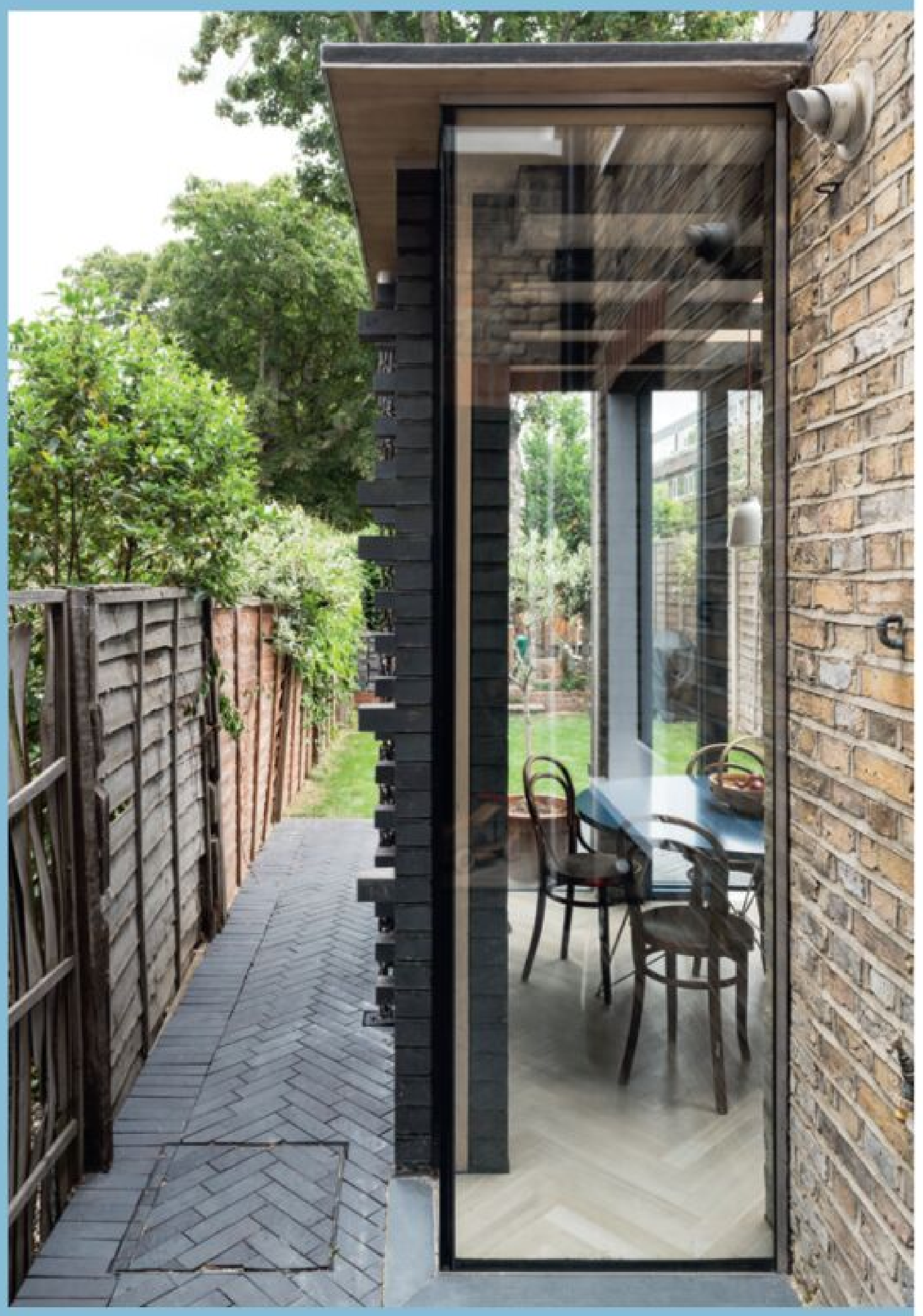
CLOSER LOOK NEW DINING SPACE



FRENCH+TYE

MW Architects designed this mini extension, measuring just 7m^2, to the rear of a south London family home, enhancing the usable area for the kitchen-diner and improving the internal floor plan. The addition shifted the gathering spaces from a cramped and dark foyer to the back of the house, which now benefits from better natural light and an enhanced link with the garden.

The compact extension was built with no structural changes internally, but instead wraps around the kitchen's original footprint. It connects to the existing home's configuration without stealing too much space from the outdoor areas, retaining part of a side alleyway, which in turn allows light into the central part of the house. The addition is used as a dining area, which has freed up space elsewhere on the ground floor.



Externally, the build provided the opportunity to introduce contrasting brick to the facade, while full-height glass doors and frameless corner glazing help bring the outdoors in.

Equally, make sure the new structure doesn't block natural brightness. "Extensions, by their very nature, tend to take away daylight from an existing space and have access to new light, even if only from above," says Matthew. "So, sometimes, if the functional need is a utility room or cloakroom, it may not be the best use of an extension. Putting these internally in the existing plan and using an extension for something else may be a better option."

Look to the front

While the first place you might think to extend is the rear of the house, building onto the frontage can offer great benefits – though there are more planning restraints.

JAMES RETIEF

STUDIO BARK

Above left: The redesign of this compact terraced house by Cairn Architects features a 10m^2 side-return extension. The scheme, which also lowered the floor to improve head height, has greatly enhanced both the layout and flow between spaces. Many materials were repurposed, while new products were chosen for their natural qualities, such as cork, wood fibre, wood wool, hempcrete, and lime plaster. Lining layers were omitted to reveal the hardwood timber structure

Above right: Measuring 4.5m wide and 3m deep, this wooden box extension to a Victorian mid-terrace home was completed in conjunction with an internal reconfiguration. Studio Bark collaborated with architect Andre Ford on the design, which creates a stunning kitchen-diner with a large fixed skylight, full-height French doors and Western Red cedar cladding

You can usually build a new porch under permitted development, for instance, but in general, alterations to the street-facing side of a house are often the most sensitive in planning policy. Designs are likely to have more success if they preserve or enhance the character of the local vernacular, don't impede the shared building line of neighbouring homes, and make a positive contribution to the property.

A new porch can elevate both functionality and kerb appeal, potentially adding value. "It serves as a useful transitional space, providing a buffer zone and improving thermal efficiency," says Robin. "When combined with additional functionalities, such as storage solutions, a dedicated area for post, or integrated bin and bike enclosures, it becomes even more valuable." You may even feel that you can remove the internal hallway now you have a porch. "This might allow a big impact in the internal layout for opening up living space. Fire regulations need to be checked, though, as the hallway is often a protected means of escape," says Matthew.

Other options for the front of a house include adding a projecting bay window, which can improve light; creating a small space for a cloakroom with unobtrusive frosted glazing; or a garage conversion with a forward projection. Be mindful of privacy. "Big windows might not be the best option in a front extension," says Matthew. "This will impact the viable uses of the room in question and the quality of the space you create."

Ensure good flow

Whether building to the front, side or rear, prioritise good flow. Ensure easy walkways between old and new, and reconfigure existing layouts to create a cohesive design – you don't want the extension to feel like a bolt on.

Many small builds are done in conjunction with an internal remodel. "This approach allows for creative reconfiguration, optimising the entire layout rather than just adding an isolated area," explains Robin. "It often proves more cost effective and less disruptive. Plus, it can allow for updates to plumbing and electrics, raising the home to meet modern standards." Matthew agrees: "I think having an overall master plan is always a good idea, even if you want to phase works," he says. "That way you make sure you can progressively get there."

Natural light can work wonders for expanding perceived dimensions, even in the most compact of extensions. It's not always about vast expanses of glazing, but rather framing views and blurring boundaries between inside and out. "A glass-to-glass corner window in a single-storey extension is relatively easy to achieve and will give an immersive connection to the exterior, making your internal space feel much bigger," says Matthew. "A tiny kitchen extension, meanwhile, could incorporate a skylight with a reflective panel, bouncing light deep into the existing space and creating the illusion of depth."

Opportunity for design flair

Since a small extension should cost less to construct, it can also present an opportunity to up-spec on finishes that may have blown the budget if used on a larger scale.

ANDY STAGG

Above: This minimalist brick-and-glass extension by Paul Archer Design added just 10m^2 of extra floor space to a grade II-listed townhouse, but has allowed the kitchen and dining area to be brought into one zone. This means that the existing space in the main house could accommodate a new guest bedroom and a bathroom. The project was completed for £4,080 per m^2

CLOSER LOOK SEAMLESS ADDITION

A single-storey side-return extension has added 17.5m^2 to the footprint of this semi-detached house in Southwark, London. The project has created a semi open-plan kitchen-living-diner, with the culinary and dining zones sited within the new addition. The old kitchen, which was located at the front of the house, was turned into a utility room and the entire ground floor refurbished as part of the works.

Ensuring adequate natural light within the space was a key part of the brief, so the extension features skylights above the seating area, casement windows at each end and Velux glazing in the kitchen. Built-in seating maximises the usable space in the dining zone, while also providing storage. The new kitchen-diner flows into the living area and garden, which is accessed by the patio doors. The project, by Simply Extend, cost around £60,000.

"Unique forms and rich materiality can create wow without it needing to be big," says Matthew. "In some ways, you can be braver with a small extension because it won't be so dominant. So, try using bold colours or materials, or even forms to create something interesting."

For example, a sleek, modern glass box extension on a Victorian home can accentuate the original building's ornate features, while creating a stunning contemporary space. Or you could add one big ticket item, such as a striking pivot door to the garden or bold cladding.

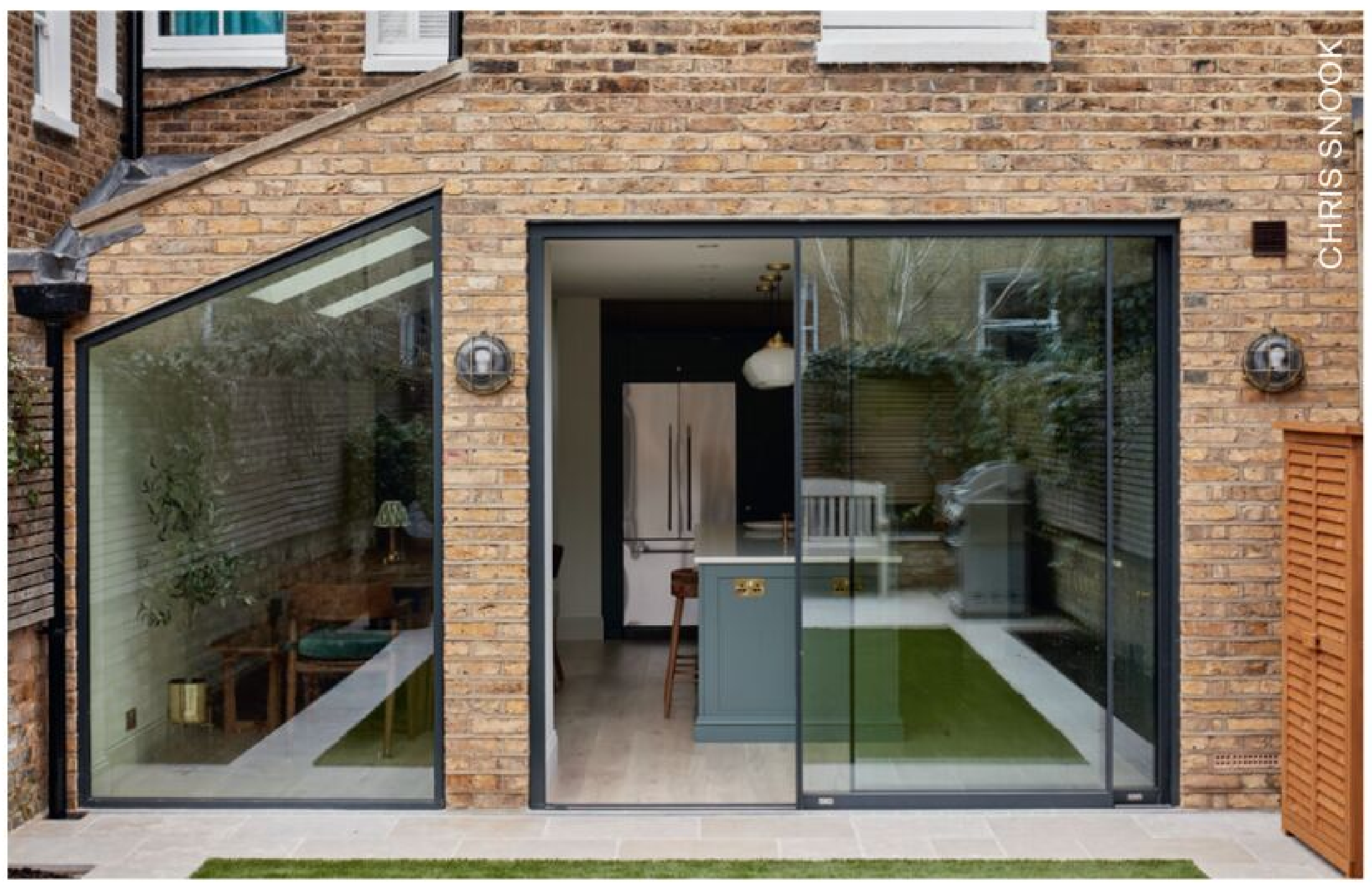
"It's amazing how lighter or more natural materials can make a compact area feel so much more spacious. I've found that simplicity often delivers the most striking results, although achieving this can be deceptively challenging," says Robin. "The wow factor frequently emerges from clean lines, thoughtful details and a careful balance with the existing structure. By crafting a solution that enhances both functionality and aesthetic appeal, even the smallest extension can significantly elevate a property's architectural character."

Below: An L-shaped wraparound extension, designed by Urbanist Architecture and built by Turnkey Contractors, has added 13.5m^2 to this property. The rear was increased by less than a metre and a side-return infilled to achieve the extra floor space for a contemporary kitchen-diner, complete with black-framed glazing

PIERCE SCOURFIELD

HENRY WOIDE

Above: A rear wraparound extension designed by MIM Studios has added just 13m^2 to this property, yet transformed what was a narrow galley kitchen into a spacious zone with dining area. Green render forms a colourful statement, while slide-and-turn glazed doors provide a great connection to the outdoors



CHRIS SNOOK

Above: With a brief to improve the ground floor of this family home, Studio Werc Architects hit upon the idea of refurbishing an existing 9m^2 side-return extension to make better use of space. Skylights above the dining area add ample light, with a bespoke picture window framing garden views, while a new kitchen by Olive & Barr is set adjacent for a seamless flow

CONTACTS

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Renovating your home with sustainable energy solutions

Self-Build Zone's Jake Fitness looks at the benefits of eco renovation, and the need to knows when installing energy-saving measures

A major renovation not only offers the opportunity to change the footprint and layout to better serve you, but also introduce sustainable alternatives for heating, ventilation, plumbing and electrics. Many homeowners choose to retrofit their properties owing to the cost-saving benefits of not moving house, plus the array of eco-friendly products and systems available to improve and future-proof your home.

First steps for planning a home renovation

An eco retrofit will attract many of the same pre-build checklist items as self building a new home from scratch. You may need to appoint a designer or architect, seek planning approvals (depending on project scope) and source a reliable builder and set of tradespeople to carry out the work.

Do your ideas fit your budget?

Decisions on eco-friendly solutions must go hand-in-hand with costing up your project. The scale of works can vary enormously depending on what you are trying to achieve. So, if your goal is creating a low-bills home, but not necessarily extending or remodelling, do your research and cost up suitable retrofit solutions that meet your needs and budget.

Protecting your eco renovation works

Most home insurance policies exclude works that exceed the value of £25,000 or which significantly alter the structure of your home. When retrospectively upgrading your house with eco energy alternatives, you must consider the impact these systems and products could have during your renovation works.

Most manufacturers of these products will not cover accidental damage when on site (or damage to your site). Solar panel batteries cost £1,000s, for instance. So, you need to ensure the whole house, as well as the products you have specified, are protected until they're installed.

Altering your roof structure or creating openings in your home also exposes you to several risks, such as water or storm damage, or security issues. These would not be covered under home insurance , hence why a site insurance policy is so important.

Top eco retrofit options

Improving the energy efficiency of your home is likely to be a top priority. Renovating using eco solutions, from insulation upgrades to low-carbon renewables, is an intelligent choice for the environment, your wallet and your lifestyle. Here are just a few options to consider:

Solar electric panels convert sunlight into electricity, which can be stored in batteries, reducing grid dependency. Solar panels will lower your monthly bills and are a proven, reliable renewable tech. They can even increase property prices, as many buyers look for homes with sustainable energy sources, including EV charging points, which can be linked to solar panel systems.

With any works, you should always check your suppliers and installers are aware of the latest requirements. For instance, a new British Standard took effect in March 2024, covering fire safety for home battery storage.

Heat pumps harness natural thermal energy from the ground or air, providing a renewable solution that reduces environmental impact and contributes to long-term energy sustainability. Although both systems use electricity, they are much more efficient than traditional heating and cooling methods – producing three to four times the energy they consume.

Heat pumps are a well understood technology, but you should always ensure a proper handover, so you know how to operate the system efficiently and fully understand any ongoing maintenance requirements.

Rainwater harvesting systems collect and store rain from rooftops or other areas. The captured water can be stored in tanks for use around the home and garden, such as flushing toilets, watering plants, cleaning and washing clothes. If it includes a water purity filtration system, it can also be used for bathing and even drinking.

Insulation measures. A draughty house is not efficient! Installing double- or triple-glazed windows will reduce heat loss. This, coupled with appropriate insulation in walls and roofs, helps to retain warmth inside during colder months and block heat from entering during the summer, so a comfortable indoor temperature can be achieved all year round.

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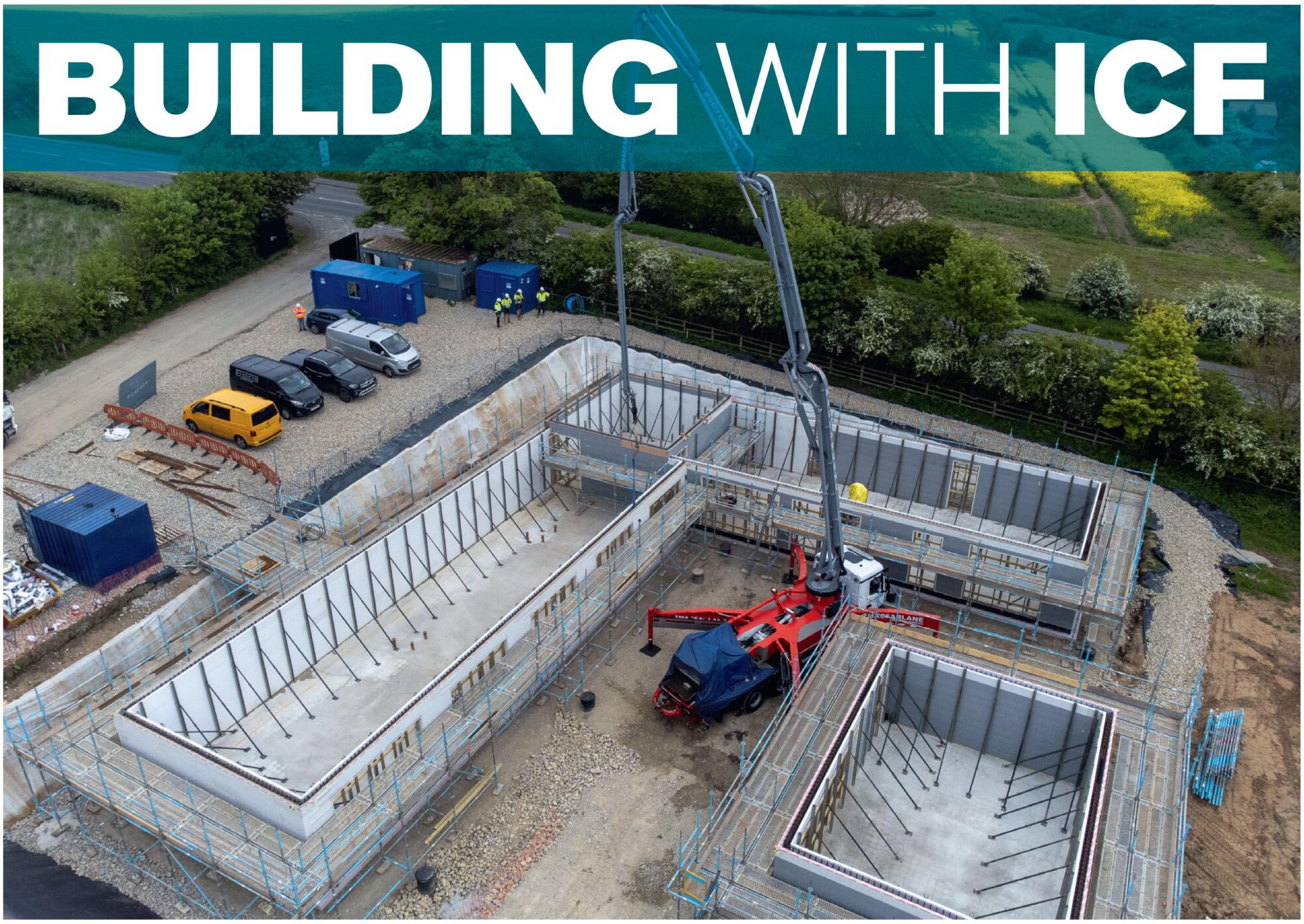
BUILDING WITH ICF



Erika Chaffey investigates the benefits of this innovative structural system, and whether it could be the right fit for your bespoke home

Above: The construction of this home by ICF Bondmor used 484m^2 of ICF walling with a 412m^2 insulated raft foundation. The entire build took 60 days to complete, and the finished property has an impressive airtightness level of 0.26$m^3/hr/m^2$

Right: Beco Wallform and Harris McCormack Architects (www.harrismccormackarchitects.co.uk) delivered this ultra-modern, low-energy five-bedroom home

Insulated concrete formwork (ICF) is a modern method of construction, ideal for those looking to create a sustainable, energy-efficient and durable structure for their dream home. But what exactly is ICF, how does it work and why should you consider it for your project? Here, I'm exploring its key benefits, what can be achieved with ICF and what to consider for a successful build.

What is ICF?

This unique construction method uses lightweight hollow blocks or panels, typically made of rigid foam insulation, which are stacked to form your walls, floors and other structures. Once assembled, steel reinforcement is added where necessary, and the forms are then filled with concrete – creating a super strong, airtight and highly insulated building envelope.

Thanks to the system's innate strength, you can build external walls, retaining walls, foundations, basements, and more with ICF. "It's highly versatile and can be used to build almost any type of structure," says Anthony Quinn, managing director at ICF Southern. So, it's a great whole-build solution for those looking to incorporate a basement into their house design, for instance, as well as for simply creating stylish, energy-efficient modern homes.

The benefits

One of the biggest advantages of building with ICF is its exceptional thermal performance. The continuous insulation and integral thermal mass of ICF means you should require less energy for heating and cooling, leading to long-term savings on energy bills and excellent comfort levels. "There's a great choice of insulation materials available to manufacture the formwork components," says Robin Miller, managing director at Beco Wallform. "ICF can reach U-values as low as 0.10 W/m^2K and the performance of some systems is already achieving the energy standards proposed for 2050."

Because the concrete is cast on site, it's possible to create a highly airtight, monolithic structure with ultra-low PSI values (a measure of heat loss along a metre of junction at a joint or cavity), minimising drafts and heat loss in your completed home. “Air permeability values of less than $1m^3/hr/m^2$ are achievable, delivering a consistently comfortable internal living environment,” says Elliot McKendrick, commercial director at ICF Bondmor. It’s then a case of specifying quality windows, doors and other products, and ensuring they’re correctly installed, for a high-performance home. “Excellent insulation and airtightness can be achieved without the need for additional tapes and barriers,” adds Richard Douglas, business development manager at BEWI.

The concrete core means ICF walls are ultra-strong, offering great durability and protection from extreme weather. “It provides outstanding safety, with fire ratings up to four hours,” says Lisa Trewin, owner and director at R-Wall Ltd. “Plus, the main structure is capable of withstanding winds of up to 250mph.” This makes ICF a popular choice for homes in exposed areas or those prone to natural hazards, such as earthquakes or flooding. The dense core also provides excellent soundproofing, making it well-suited to creating calm, enjoyable spaces. It enables the use of concrete floor structures to provide open-plan spaces with reduced internal noise transfer.

“ICF is very low-maintenance,” says Richard. “Your structure won’t deteriorate over time from wear and tear.” This means you can create a longlasting, futureproof home with little upkeep, except to your exterior finish.

What’s more, ICF is a relatively straightforward system, offering an efficient build programme. “Speed of construction is another great benefit,” says Chris Oram, technical sales at ICF Supplies. “It’s possible to keep building work moving in the rain, so your project won’t necessarily be held up by bad weather.”

Design potential

ICF offers the flexibility to achieve a range of architectural styles and finishes. “If you can imagine it, you can build it with ICF,” says Chris. The system’s innate strength means you can incorporate wow-factor design features, from curved walls and arches to large cantilevers, big spans of glazing and expansive open-plan living spaces.

“ICF blocks are engineered with regular mechanical fixing points which allow for the direct application of cladding or masonry ties,” says Elliot. So, whether you’re looking to create a heritage-style facade or an ultra-modern design, ICF supports a range of finishes, such as brick, timber and render. “It’s possible to create a highly customised look while keeping the energy-efficient core intact,” adds Anthony.

Key considerations

As with any system, building with ICF requires thoughtful planning and a coordinated approach. Here are some critical aspects to consider for an ICF project:

1 Site preparation and structural engineering. It’s essential to prepare your site effectively and ensure your design is tailored to support the concrete pours. “Your concrete will arrive in large wagons and be injected with boom pumps, which also require a lot of space,” says Elliot. The ground conditions on your site need to be assessed to ensure they can support the weight of the necessary equipment. “Working with engineers who understand ICF

JULIET MURPHY PHOTOGRAPHY

Above & inset: Designed by AV Architects (www.architectsav.co.uk) with ICF Supplies, this stunning heritage-style self build in Kent features four storeys, eight bedrooms and has a high B energy rating

DOES ICF COST MORE?

Building with ICF generally comes with a higher upfront cost than some alternative build systems. “Generally speaking, we’ve seen that ICF can cost approximately 10% more than other standard construction methods for one-off builds,” says Elliot. However, this is typically offset by long-term savings on ongoing costs such as energy bills, ease of maintenance, and the excellent longevity of your completed home. “Self builders can expect to pay between £150-£190 per m^2 of wall for installation, labour, hire of props, rebar, concrete supply and placement,” says Anthony. “This is for above ground structures, depending on the complexity of the project, location and material specifications.”

“As building standards move progressively towards Passivhaus or equivalent levels of performance, ICF will become increasingly cost-effective as much of the requirements for reaching these values is already built into the system,” says Robin. The energy efficiency, comfort, flexibility and durability that come with an ICF home make it a wise long-term investment.

DAVID BARBOUR

Right: Build It readers Ray and Ruth Davis engaged ICF builders Econekt (www.econekt.co.uk) for their part-subterranean home. ICF allowed ample glazing in the project's design. The apex gable on the rear elevation has two sets of sliding doors installed above one another across two storeys, creating the feel of a fully glazed facade

is crucial," says Anthony. This will help to optimise the building's structural performance and ensure your project runs smoothly from start to finish.

2 Construction sequencing. The timing of your concrete pours needs to be carefully planned and incorporated into your overall construction timeline. Map out each stage, so you know everything is in place and you can ensure an efficient build programme.

"It's vital to avoid any alterations once your project has started," says Robin. As with most systems, changes to your design may not be possible after your plans have been finalised and works started. Cutting concrete requires specialist equipment, so alterations are likely to lead to substantial added costs.

Above: The Build It Education House features Nudura ICF walling, from ICF Supplies, for the basement and above-ground external walls. The shell of the 80m2 basement, fully insulated and ready to fit-out internally, was completed for £78,800 (£985 per m^2)

3 Incorporating services. Plumbing and electrics need to be considered early on in the design and build process, as these systems are integrated into your ICF walls. Detailed planning will ensure these elements are incorporated smoothly and successfully into your structure. "Because it's a dense material, ensure penetrations for your services are placed through the ICF prior to pour," says Lisa. This will be more convenient on site and contribute to great levels of airtightness.

4 Wall thickness. ICF walls are generally thicker than many alternative methods of construction. However, finishes such as modern render can be direct-applied, saving time and helping to minimise wall depth. Internally, most self builders will switch to blockwork and stud walls rather than ICF to maximise the floor plan.

Assembling the right team

Work with architects, engineers and builders who have experience with ICF to maximise your chances of a smooth and successful project that delivers on your specifications. "Collaboration between the principal design team and specialist contractors and consultants is always the best practice," says Elliot. "This allows for value engineering of your scheme to find the most cost-effective solution." More architects and trades are familiar with ICF these days, partly thanks to suppliers' training, meaning it's easier than ever to find good partners.

That said, if you want to get more hands-on with your project, ICF could be a good choice. "With a head for detail and basic DIY skills, carrying out the build yourself is very achievable," says Chris. There are limits, however; basement projects should always be carried out by a professional, for instance, due to their added complexity. "If you're considering a hands-on build, it's important that your chosen supplier provides you with good training and a technical support programme," says Robin.

Whatever your level of involvement in the build itself, it's vital to discuss your design with a trusted supplier early on to make sure the system will meet your unique requirements and project goals. Where possible, speak to people who live in or have built their own ICF homes and visit a live site to understand the benefits first hand. "Get as much independent feedback as you can, so that the supplier and design you specify is best suited to your site and preferences," says Chris.

CONTACTS **Beco Wallform** 01652 653844 www.becowallform.co.uk **BEWI ICF Sytem** 0870 600 3666 www.bewi.com **ICF Bondmor** 0113 837 0157 www.icfbondmor.co.uk **ICF Southern** 01903 744440 www.icfsouthern.co.uk **ICF Supplies** 01268 542748 www.icfsuppliesltd.co.uk **R-Wall Ltd** 01288 377337 www.r-wall.co.uk

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JIM STEPHENSON

As part of the renovation and extension of the ground floor of this Victorian property, Whittaker Parsons (whittakerparsons.com) developed a strategy to improve its thermal performance. Insulation made from recycled coffee bean bags was fitted in the existing ground-floor structure, laid above an airtight membrane to prevent heat escaping. Gutex (gutex.co.uk) Thermoflex woodfibre insulation was installed in the walls

RETROFITTING INSULATION

Alan Tierney explains why it's important to understand the building fabric of your home before taking steps to improve its thermal performance, and summarises the best strategies for success

In the drive to minimise the effects of climate change and reduce energy bills, the thermal performance of domestic properties is becoming increasingly important. While energy efficiency standards for new build homes are improving, the fact remains that most existing and older houses would still benefit from upgrades to their thermal fabric.

The most important factor in how effectively a building is able to retain heat is whether it can be consistently dry – however, there are many properties that have some serious failings in this area. The next potential issue to consider is airtightness – though this is often neglected, too. Improvements to this aspect of a dwelling's performance are relatively simple and low cost to carry out, yielding substantial overall benefits. Once these two matters have been properly addressed, it's time to look at developing a suitable strategy for retrofitting additional insulation.

What type of property do you have?

Your home is likely to fall into one of three general groups – and it's important to bear in mind that the appropriate insulation solution for each is quite different. The first category is old, traditionally constructed houses built before 1918. The second bracket encompasses mid-20th century properties, erected roughly between 1919 and the 1990s. The final type is for modern dwellings.

Homes in the first group were developed with no conscious efforts at insulation. That being said, many of the construction methods and materials used were inherently thermally efficient, such as thatched roofs and thick walls incorporating earth, as well as clay-and lime-based binders and renders. They also tend to benefit from high thermal mass, which helps to retain warmth. In these houses, damp and airtightness are often much more prevalent issues. It's vital to understand that these buildings were constructed from permeable, absorbent materials with no vapour barriers or damp proof course. For them to work effectively and – most importantly – stay dry, any insulation materials incorporated into the fabric must be vapour permeable and hygroscopic. In

SCOTT WICKING

Ian Hazard Architects (ianhazard.com) developed the plans for the renovation and conversion of a listed cart shed in North Yorkshire. As a building of solid stone construction, the use of modern plastic or non-breathable materials was not possible. Instead, the external stone walls were repointed with non-hydraulic quick lime mortar. Once the walls had been repaired and dried out, they were insulated internally using a natural, breathable wood fibre solution, before being finished with a coat of non-hydraulic quick lime plaster

practice, that means using minimally processed natural fibre insulation. Appropriate solutions include wood fibre, hemp, sheep's wool and recycled newspaper.

Mid-20th century houses are often found to offer the worst performance in terms of heat loss. They were built using modern materials, largely cement and hard fired bricks, with uninsulated cavity walls. They have limited thermal mass, so the fabric tends to cool quickly. For much of this period, oil was cheap and plentiful and the dangers of climate change weren't generally recognised. As a result, minimising a house's heating requirements during construction wasn't considered a priority.

Modern dwellings have been subject to increasingly stringent regulations for conserving heat and power. For example, they must incorporate a protective thermal layer in the walls, floors and roof. Cavity walls will be insulated and incorporate a physical vapour barrier that prevents water penetration from bridging the gap via the insulation. If there are issues with this, the best course of action will likely involve upgrading the fabric to conform with more recent regulations, or by rectifying any failures made during construction. Unfortunately, poor standards, inadequate enforcement of the standards and the use of low-quality materials to minimise costs have always been common, particularly in volume housebuilding.

Below: Mike Wye (mikewye.co.uk) provided the Steico woodfibre insulation for this retrofit project. The vapour-permeable material is produced using wood from sustainably managed forests

STEICO
AP renova

Where to insulate

ROOFS Loft insulation is the cheapest, easiest and most effective means of reducing heat loss from your home. For buildings constructed before 1918, the product you specify should be in the form of quilts or batts of insulating fibres. These can be simply rolled out over the ceiling below. For more modern homes there's a range of alternative solutions including rockwool, recycled PET (polyethylene terephthalate plastic) or fibreglass – but be aware that this is hazardous, so protective equipment must be worn during the installation process.

Current regulations stipulate a minimum insulation depth of 270mm. Old buildings will originally have had no protective thermal barrier in the attic at all, and even modern properties that pre-date 2003 are unlikely to have a sufficiently thick layer. It's also essential that cross ventilation of the roof space is maintained – the insulation material you choose should not extend right up to the eaves, where there should be open vents to the outside.

Warm roofs, where the insulation is above the roof space, are much harder to deal with – any upgrades you make are likely to require the services of a specialist contractor. However, it's still important to ensure loft insulation is sufficient and should be your top priority to yield the best return on your efforts.

A WORD OF WARNING

Bear in mind that the installation of insulation is not subject to any licensing or regulation. Unfortunately, this means there's a number of unscrupulous operators looking to cash in on the growing market. Before engaging someone, check their qualifications, experience and track record. The following points highlight some of the very serious problems caused by lack of care, skill or knowledge:

External wall insulation fitted without sufficient attention to building details can cause damage over time, rendering whole streets of houses uninhabitable

Retrofitted cavity wall insulation in high exposure zones leading to extreme penetrating damp

Impermeable PIR (polyisocyanurate) solutions fitted internally to solid walls, causing severe mould growth and failure of the building fabric

Spray foam insulation installed in roofs and floor voids, leading to an airtight seal that causes condensation as moisture can't pass through

Left: PYC Insulation (pycgroup.co.uk) was appointed to install Warmcel (warmcel.co.uk) insulation, made from recycled newspaper, in this house. The insulation is blown into the structure via an injection hole using a specialist blowing machine. Once the process is complete, the gap behind the injection point is fully filled and an airtight patch is applied

FLOORS In addition to contributing to a property's overall levels of heat loss, uninsulated floors have a disproportionate effect on the comfort of occupants, due to the fact that you're, more or less, always in constant contact with the floor.

Modern buildings almost exclusively have insulated solid floors and shouldn't need any attention. Older buildings might have either solid or suspended timber floors, the latter of which will not originally have been insulated. This type of structure also tends to be draughty, so both issues can be resolved at the same time.

Insulating a suspended timber floor should be relatively straightforward and affordable. The most difficult task is lifting the floorboards carefully so they can be replaced afterwards. This might require a seasoned carpenter – the older the floor, the more skill is required and avoiding damage becomes more important. Once the boards have been lifted an airtightness membrane can be draped and stapled to the joists to form pockets in the spaces between. These compartments can then be filled with insulating material; loose fill cellulose works best and is relatively low cost. The boards are then simply replaced.

Solid floors present a greater challenge. If there are high ceilings it may be possible to insulate over the existing floor and lay a new finish on top. However, this is likely to cause difficulties with dimensions across the ground floor, particularly in doorways, which can be costly to resolve.

Usually, the only solution is to dig out the floor to a sufficient depth to incorporate the insulation material, a new floor slab and finish. This is expensive, highly disruptive and is usually only justifiable if there are also damp issues associated with the existing floor. In older buildings with shallow foundations, extreme caution is required. It's also worth bearing in mind that this intervention wouldn't be appropriate if it would lead to the loss of a historic floor of any value.

WALLS Heat loss through walls is dependent on the nature of the partition. Uninsulated cavity walls or single skin brickwork are the most problematic. Thick solid structures, on the other hand, should perform better and benefit from considerable thermal mass.

Retrofitting cavity wall insulation has long been a standard solution; it can yield significant benefits for a limited cost, with minimal disruption. But it's not without risk. The space in the middle is intended to provide the barrier to penetrating damp; there is no physical vapour barrier as in a modern cavity wall. Filling the aperture with insulation material can bridge the gap, enabling damp to penetrate to the inside. The risk is minimal for sheltered buildings but increases dramatically with the degree of exposure. Retrofitted buildings in high exposure zones (mostly the west of Britain) have suffered serious consequences that are difficult to resolve. Internal wall insulation can be a good solution for these structures if there's sufficient internal space to accommodate it. Alternatively, external wall insulation is an option if it's possible to make the necessary alterations to exterior design details such as eaves, rainwater goods and windowsills. Neither option is straightforward, and requires detailed specification by a specialist.

Above: Rockwool (rockwool.com) stone wool insulation is made from naturally occurring basalt volcanic rock, mixed with recycled and upcycled secondary materials. It can be used to treat walls, floors, ceilings, roofs, pipes and ducts

Insulating solid walls is more problematic and carries risks of damp, mould growth and fabric decay. I generally don't recommend it. There are, however, instances where it is considered necessary. In these scenarios, the only material that's been used successfully in heritage homes is wood fibre insulation board. It is essential that any specification is carried out by a highly qualified specialist.

ALAN TIERNEY

Alan Tierney is a period property consultant and conservation specialist. He runs Picketts Historic Building Conservation (www.pickettsconservation.co.uk), which offers hands-on advice to owners of heritage homes.

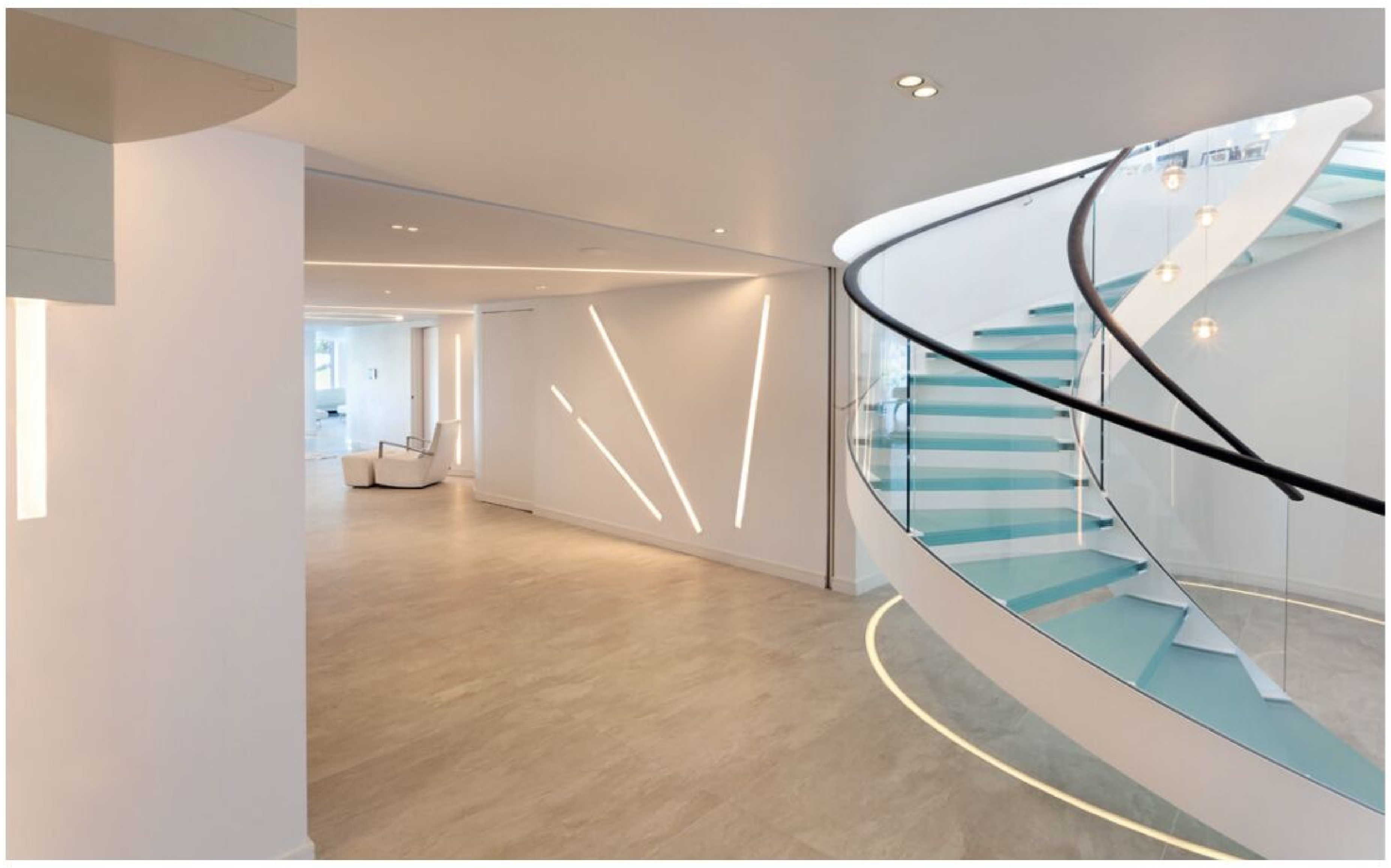
THE ADVANTAGES OF SMART LIGHTING

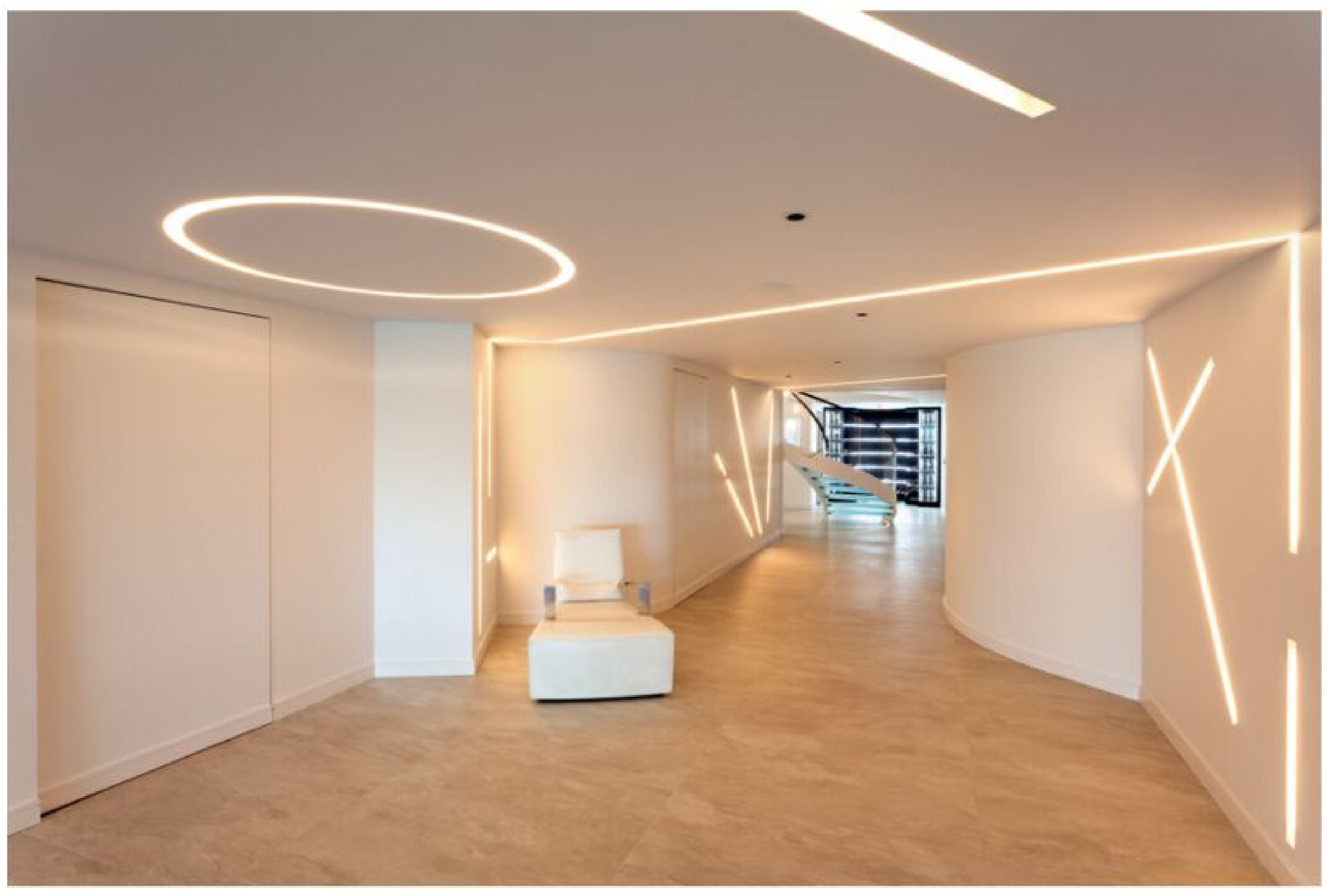
Whether you're self building from scratch or upgrading your current setup, Anna-Marie DeSouza looks at how smart lighting can adapt to your individual lifestyle for a more efficient home

Right: This Theben smart lighting install enhances security and safety, while make your outdoor space more comfortable to use – all without the harshness of standard floodlights

Adding convenience, energy efficiency and customisation to living spaces, it's no surprise that the demand for connected home solutions, including smart lighting, has surged in recent years. The ability to control lighting remotely, as well as integrate it with different automation systems, makes smart lighting a top choice for tech-savvy self builders and home renovators.

Advances in technology mean this technology is more accessible, too. The drive to futureproof homes with adaptable technology has made smart solutions a mainstream essential in contemporary homes. "One of the biggest advantages of modern smart lighting systems is their user-friendliness. Solutions like Lutron and Control4 are designed with simplicity in mind," says Mia Menzies, project manager at Hestia Smart Living. "Homeowners can control their lights through intuitive apps on their smartphones, touchscreens installed throughout the home, or even through voice commands via smart assistants like Alexa or Google Home. We ensure that the setup and interface are easy to navigate, even for those who aren't tech-savvy."





Above & right: As part of this stunning modern home in West Yorkshire, Brilliant Lighting integrated Lutron HomeWorks QS to offer intuitive control of the multi-layered lighting across large open-plan spaces

Key benefits

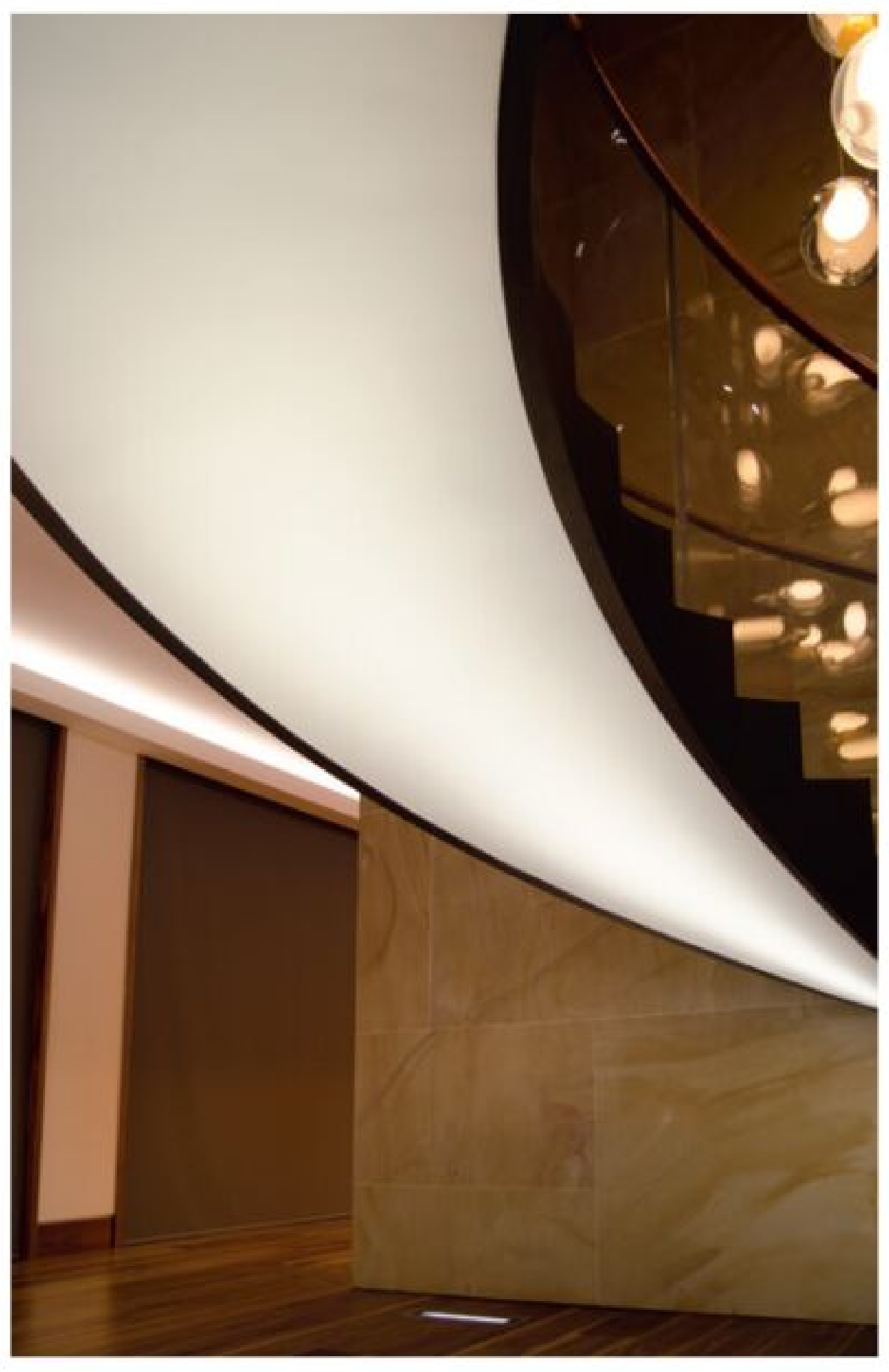
Smart lighting systems go beyond basic illumination, providing a simplified infrastructure for homeowners that's both practical and efficient. One of the standout features is flexibility – meaning that managing lighting is straightforward, even when no one is home, and it can be automated with simple schedules throughout the day.

Smart lighting also promotes efficiency; dimmable lights, motion sensors and programmable controls all optimise energy usage. "Smart lighting systems offer remarkable benefits in energy efficiency and design flexibility by seamlessly integrating with other home automation elements, such as heating, ventilation and shading," says Paul Foulkes, UK country manager at Theben Automation. "When implemented as part of a whole-house setup, smart lighting enhances efficiency by creating coordinated scenes that respond to factors like occupancy, daylight levels and temperature. For instance, presence detectors don't just turn lights on when someone enters a room; they also inform the heating system about who's home, ventilation systems about humidity, and shading systems about light levels."

In terms of customisation, users can set up unique lighting scenes to match different activities or moods. For instance, with one touch you can switch from a warm, dimmed scheme for a cosy movie night to a brighter, more dynamic scene for entertaining guests.

Modern smart lighting systems go way beyond simple dimming, they adapt to human-centric factors, like seasonal light cycles, weather patterns, circadian rhythms and movement within spaces, making them particularly effective for health and productivity. "Energy savings of up to 80-90% are possible when smart lighting systems use advanced PIR sensors to adjust artificial lighting based on natural daylight," says Paul.

"The flexibility of smart lighting is equally impressive, especially with systems such as DALI-2. Through an app or control software, users can reassign individual lights, sensors, and switches into different groups or zones without the need to rewire." This is particularly advantageous in spaces with changeable layouts, such as open-plan kitchen and living areas. Here, smart lighting can provide a unique, tailored experience that meets both individual lifestyle preferences and energy saving goals.



Infrastructure basics

For new builds and home improvement projects, there are three infrastructure options for smart lighting systems. Hardwired solutions are the go-to choice for new builds or major renovations, allowing cabling to be embedded within the walls for reliable, long-term performance. Wireless systems can be ideal for existing homes, enabling quick retrofitting without the challenge of getting cables where they need to be without extensive construction works. Wireless options typically operate through Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, or dedicated hubs. Finally, hybrid solutions, which combine both hardwired and wireless components, provide flexibility to tailor the setup based on each home's layout and needs.

"Smart lighting systems come in a myriad of styles, with varying complexities and costs associated with them," says Nic Black, managing director at Sigma Design. "Hard wired lighting will always be robust in terms of its connectivity and therefore reliability. Wireless solutions have come a long way in recent years, however, and options include everything from simple RF transmission to mesh technologies such as Zigbee or Casambi (Bluetooth) and, if planned properly, can be very reliable."

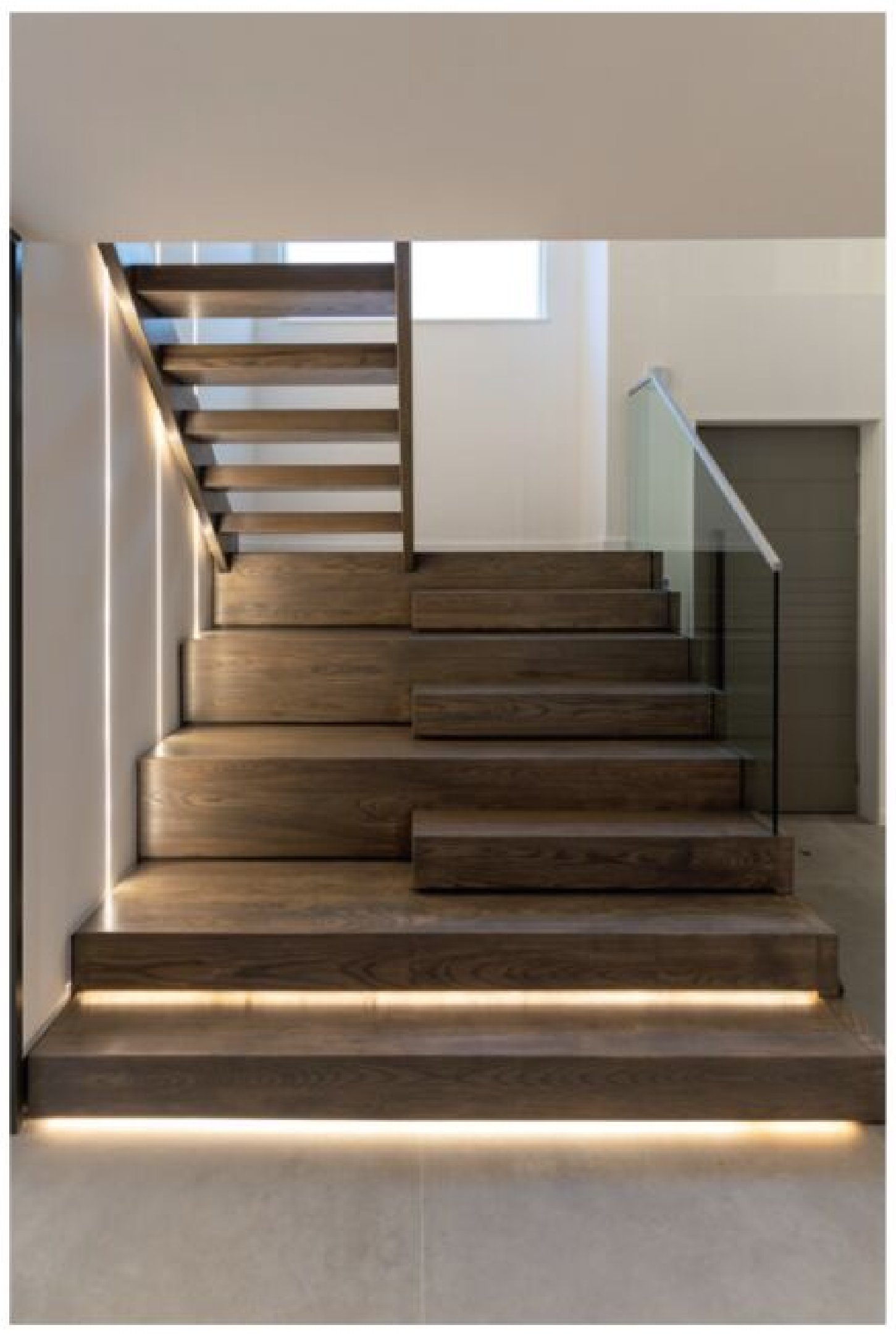
It's worth noting that many setups are part of a family of interconnected products, allowing users to control various elements like lighting, door locks, blinds and garage doors from a single platform. As the market advances, manufacturers are increasingly enabling these devices to work together seamlessly.

If you're aiming for advanced setups, such as triggering lighting scenes when starting a movie or activating outdoor illumination when the CCTV security system detects movement, a comprehensive approach is essential. "What's most important with technologies like this is to ensure you get expert advice before designing a system," says Nic. "The complexity of integrating smart technology into a home environment presents potential pitfalls that a specialist can avoid."

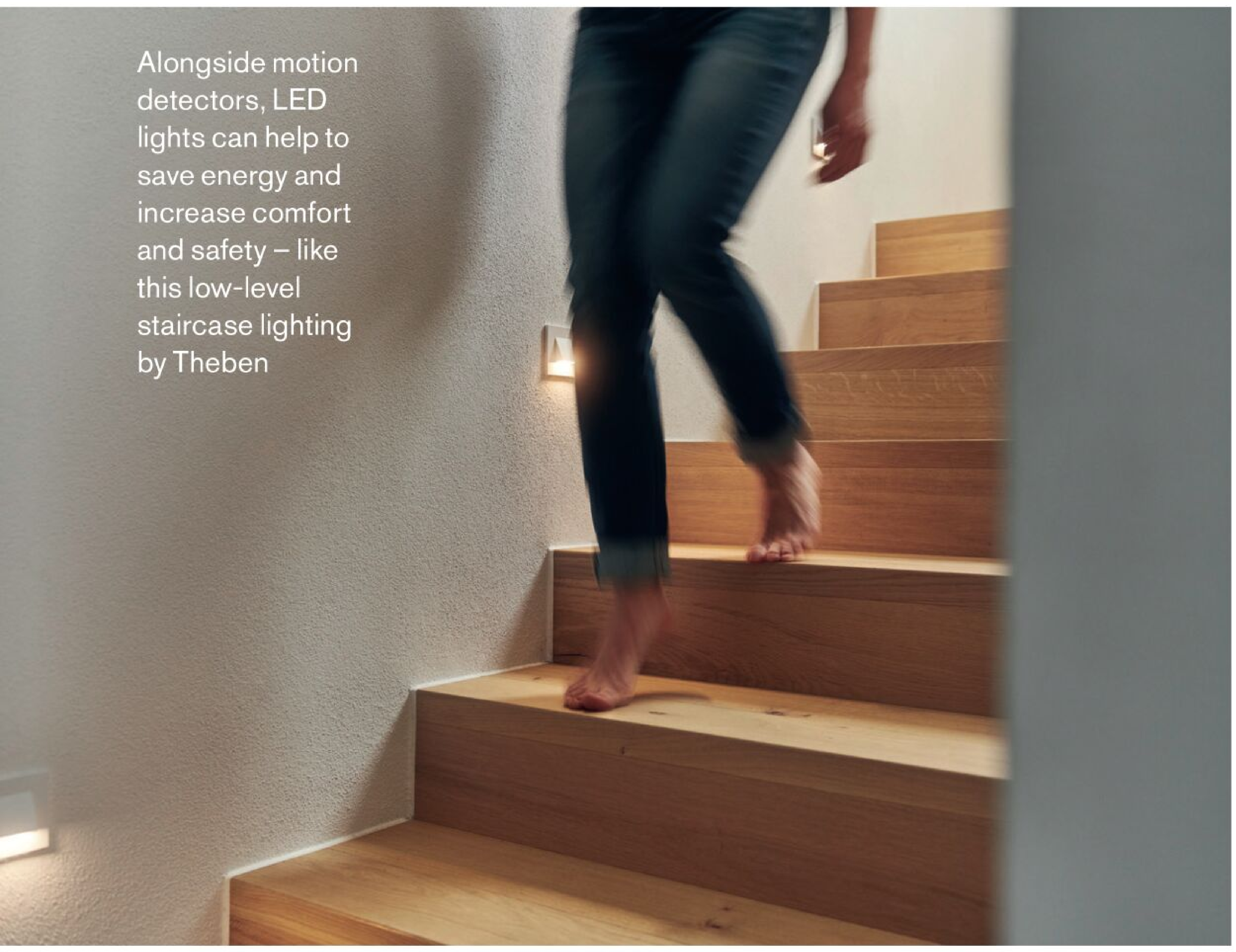
Practical applications

Smart lighting can transform how we use and experience the different spaces in our homes. From creating a good working environment to enhancing security and supporting daily routines, the best setups

Above: This award-winning new build features a smart lighting system, by Sigma Design, that adapts to natural daylight patterns. The circadian lighting shifts from warm hues in the evening to daylight tones in the morning, all synchronised to an astronomical clock for comfort



Left: Hestia Smart Living created a bespoke interior design package for this home in Cheshire. An efficient smart lighting, audio and visual scheme was implemented, with remote access from across the property via touchpads



Alongside motion detectors, LED lights can help to save energy and increase comfort and safety – like this low-level staircase lighting by Theben

will adapt to meet your needs. "Smart lighting systems, such as those we install using market leading brands like Lutron and Control4, offer incredible flexibility in tailoring lighting to suit the unique functions of each room," says Mia. "For workspaces, we can design lighting schemes that boost concentration and productivity, using cooler, brighter lighting to create an energising environment. In contrast, relaxation areas such as living rooms or bedrooms can have warmer, dimmed lighting for a more calming atmosphere."

Beyond ambiance, smart lighting is a powerful security tool. Presence simulation can mimic typical lighting patterns when homeowners are away, giving the impression that someone is there – an effective deterrent for potential intruders. "Additionally, integrating motion sensors allows the lights to turn on automatically when movement is detected, either inside or outside the home. This feature enhances safety while ensuring areas like hallways and outdoor spaces are well-lit whenever needed, without wasting energy," says Mia.

One of the biggest advantages of smart lighting is its ability to align with daily routines. Homeowners can set their lights to gradually brighten in the morning, mimicking natural sunlight for a gentle wake-up. In the evening, lights can dim automatically, setting a relaxed ambiance to help wind down. "With smart systems like Control4, you can program custom schedules that align with your routine, and these can be adjusted seasonally or whenever your schedule changes," says Mia. "It's all about creating the perfect lighting environment that adapts to your individual lifestyle."

Outdoors, smart lighting can transform gardens, terraces, and pathways into both functional and aesthetic places. Motion-triggered low-level orientation lights, for instance, can illuminate paths without the harshness of floodlights, making outdoor areas safer and more usable without disrupting the atmosphere.

"Outdoor architectural lighting can add ambiance, highlight features and create depth, particularly when integrated with the home's interior lighting and automation systems," says Paul. "Selecting a system that supports open protocols, like KNX with DALI-2 integration, enables comprehensive control over lighting and other building management functions. This scalability, combined with a user-friendly interface, ensures the lighting system is intuitive and adaptable, enhancing both indoor and outdoor living experiences."

What to budget

So, if you're planning a self build, what should your cost expectations be for a fully integrated smart lighting system? "The budget range for a fully integrated smart lighting system for a new build or renovation depends on the size and layout of your home, and the level of customisation you want," says Nic.

He suggests that for self builds, a basic smart lighting system for a standard five-bedroom home can cost around £15,000. Higher-end or custom systems can cost upwards of £25,000-£35,000. In terms of a renovation, he estimates that a mid-range lighting and electrical update for this kind of project might cost between £8,500-£14,500.

EXPERT Q&A

CHARLOTTE GALE

IAIN SHAW, director at Brilliant Lighting answers your FAQs

Q What smart lighting innovations have you seen recently that homeowners should be aware of?

A Apps now offer users the ability to make significant changes to their own systems without having to call on the dealers who installed them. It's not a particularly sexy change, but it's a massive improvement in the way people can use their own setup. We can continue to manage the system overall and our client can tweak things without needing an engineer to visit. DIY products have had this from the start; the professional systems are now catching up.

Q What are some common mistakes homeowners make when specifying their system?

A Smart lighting control can't create magic on its own. We love lighting control – we're the biggest Lutron dealer outside of London and it's a huge part of our offering – but we understand its role is to support great lighting design, not give you great lighting. Smart control without good lighting is a huge waste of time, money and emotion. Don't focus on the system, focus on the light.

Q Do you have any other troubleshooting tips?

A Try to use multiple circuits of light together to do the work; don't try and get a small number of circuits to do every job. For example, taking all your downlights in the ceiling and dimming them to 50% isn't going to give you cosy, it's going to give you dim. Create your cosy scene from circuits that are designed to perform that function, and then call them from your smart lighting app.

Also, don't just rely on apps. We like to install keypads by the door, where you would expect a light switch. Those keypads might be really sophisticated, but they should present a simple view to the user of what they do. We use engraved, backlit keypads that make it clear what will happen when they are pressed. The apps are great but don't always give the best user experience. People often prefer physical keypads by doors.

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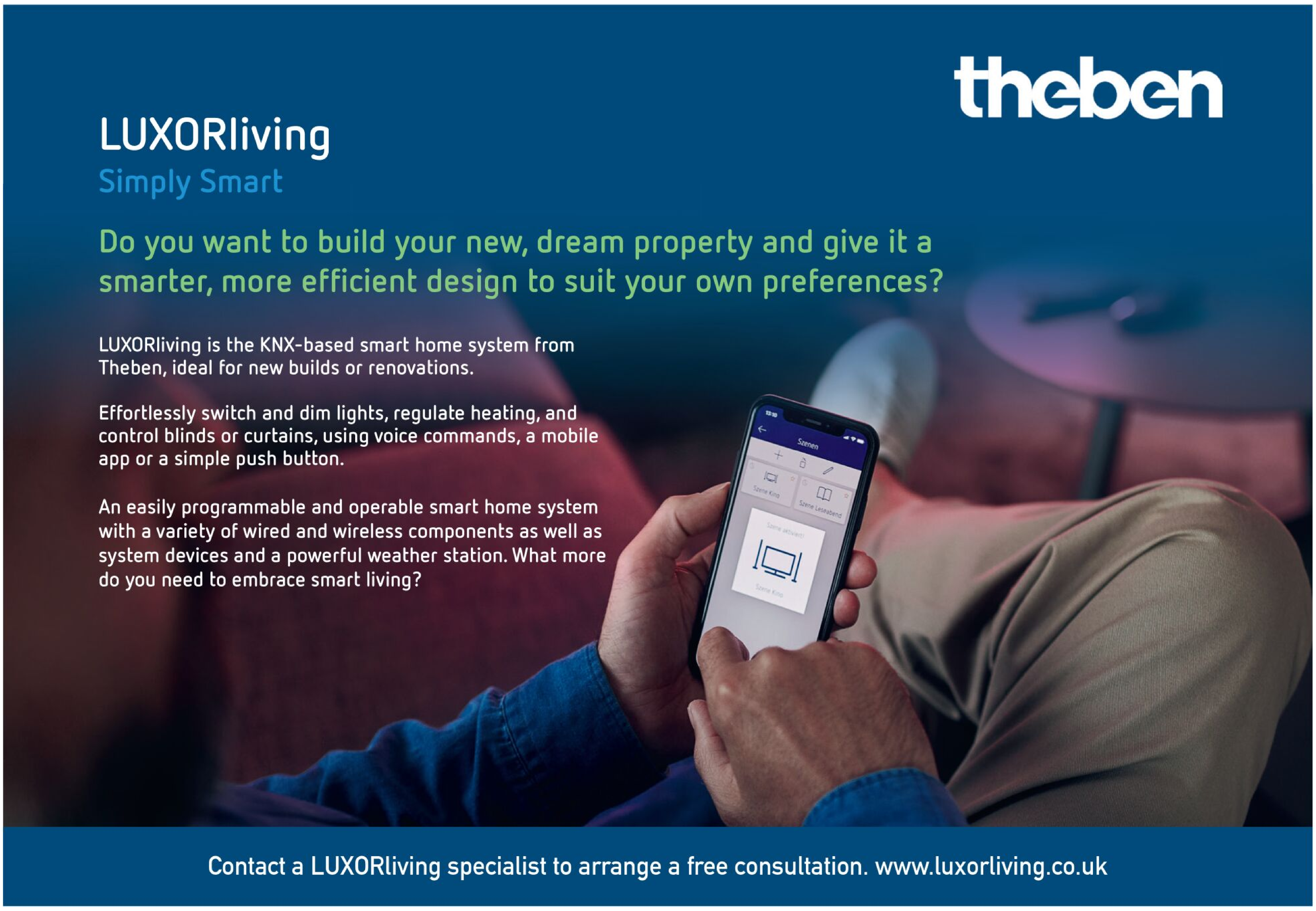

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CONTEMPORARY FIREPLACE IDEAS

Sander Tel rounds up a selection of innovative, stylish designs that'll keep your home cosy, and speaks to the experts about how to specify the right model for your scheme

MATTHEW HERITAGE

TRIPLE-SIDED STATEMENT

With a considered design, your fireplace can become a wow-factor architectural element that contributes to your home's aesthetic. This self build in Cornwall, designed by ARCO2 Architecture, features bright, open-plan zones to capture the spectacular coastal views. Incorporated as part of a broken-plan scheme, the striking fire can be enjoyed from both the kitchen and snug. **(www.arco2.co.uk)**

SUSPENDED CENTREPIECE

Looking to create a dramatic, stylish statement? Hanging fires offer guaranteed wow factor and will make a smart addition to an open-plan living space. These appliances are hung from the ceiling, rather than secured to the floor or wall, which means you'll have ultimate flexibility regarding where your unit is placed. Seen here is the stunning Onyx Orbit ceiling-hung electric fire. Shown with a 1.6m flue pipe (£765) and flat ceiling mounting assembly (£155), this model starts at £3,565. **(www.onyxfires.com)**

SLEEK SETUP

Your stove or fire's shape can have a big impact on the overall space – from cylindrical to cubic or rectangular models, there's plenty of options. Jotul's F171 cylindrical woodburning stove has a 5kW heat output and uses Zensoric technology – a sensor that monitors the temperature in the stove and adjusts air flow accordingly to optimise the wood's combustion process. From £3,082.50 + VAT. **(www.jotul.co.uk)**

BROKEN-PLAN LIVING

A fire can be used to break up a larger zone with a full-height dividing wall – creating ambience while adding a standout feature to the room. As seen in this setup, the DRU Virtuo 100/3 Evolve electric fire perfectly separates a dining and living space without sacrificing daylight. This design has a three-sided, realistic log fire display, anti-reflective glass and a fire bed of glowing embers. It can be operated by remote control, too, with a selection of flame colours and effects available. From £4,295. **(www.drufire.com)**

MULTIFUNCTIONAL SOLUTION

Consider the different functions that your stove can perform to ensure you're maximising its use. Mendip Stoves' Loxton 3 cooktop woodburner combines a traditional stove design with a simple cast iron cooktop, with an extended plate to keep meals or drinks warm. Boasting an A+ energy rating and a 4kW nominal output, it's available with or without a log store and is perfect for cooking without gas or electricity. From £1,129. **(www.mendipstoves.co.uk)**

EXPERT VIEW HOW WILL FUEL TYPE AFFECT MY DESIGN?

MICHAEL COKE, from Stovax & Gazco, takes a look at how to choose the right fuel type for your stove and how this can impact your design

Solid fuel stoves and fires come in two main varieties: dedicated woodburners, which burn only logs, and multi-fuel appliances, which can burn both logs and smokeless fuels. These options offer a wide array of design styles, making them highly desirable for those seeking both atmosphere and aesthetics. Woodburning stoves are also often considered an attractive, eco-conscious choice for those looking to reduce their home's carbon footprint.

Solid fuel When considering solid fuel appliances, it's important to check for any local smoke control regulations. Fortunately, many stoves and fires are approved for use in smoke control areas, meaning even urban homeowners can enjoy the warmth and ambience of a real flame with the right exemption. A qualified installer will also ensure that your product adheres to the manufacturer's instructions on clearances to combustibles, providing a safe installation.

Gas If you're leaning towards gas, the latest gas stoves and fires offer incredibly realistic flames that mimic the appearance of an authentic woodburning fire. With designs ranging from traditional to modern, these appliances offer great performance without sacrificing style. One benefit of gas, beyond convenience, is that many models are available as balanced flue versions, which negates the need for a chimney. A balanced flue gas fire or stove instead requires a twin-wall pipe to vent directly through an outside wall. Air for combustion is drawn in through the outer pipe whilst the inner pipe removes the combustion gases to the exterior of the property.

Electric For those prioritising ease of installation and flexibility, electric stoves and fires are a perfect solution. Requiring only a standard three-pin socket, electric fires can be installed almost anywhere in your home, providing instant, localised heat while creating a stunning focal point. Many electric fires are also now incorporated into media wall installations, creating a central hub for entertainment and often paired with LED mood lighting.

Whichever fuel type you opt for, it's essential to consider the heat output required for your space. An expert will help you make the right choice.

BLENDING IN

If you're after a more modest design, or are limited with internal space, an inset fire could be a great option. Boasting an innovative and efficient heat convection system, easy-to-use controls and a tertiary burn system to improve efficiency, the multi-fuel iSeries Cassette from Arada ensures homeowners get the most out of their fuel. A two-position door mechanism assists cold lighting and an internal flue fitting guarantees a clean, modern aesthetic. From £1,830 incl VAT. **(www.aradastoves.com)**

MEDIA WALL

A media wall is a modern and multifunctional feature that combines entertainment, storage and aesthetic elements into one cohesive unit. They usually incorporate a television and a fireplace, surrounded by shelving, cabinets or decorative ornaments. This Gazco eStudio 135R electric fire has been installed alongside a TV and built-in shelving unit to create a functional and stylish media wall scheme. Shown with an optional birch log effect (£175) this model starts at £1,599. **(www.gazco.com)**

FREESTANDING DESIGN

A freestanding fireplace is the perfect way to delineate your interior spaces with a focal feature. Pictured here is Charlton & Jenrick's iRange i1000e Deep Electric Fire, designed into a plinth structure that acts as a neat, multifunctional display unit. The fire features a one-metre-wide display, ultra-realistic flame effects and customisable LED mood lighting. With multiple flame settings and a deep fuel bed, it creates a stunning centrepiece in any room. Easy to install, it offers a 2kW maximum heat output and so is ideal for modern interiors. From £1,599. **(www.charltonandjenrick.co.uk)**

EXPERT VIEW INCORPORATING A FIREPLACE INTO YOUR INTERIOR SCHEME

IAN ARMSTRONG, director at ARCO2 Architecture, shares how you can maximise the design potential of a modern stove or fireplace

Establish your design intentions

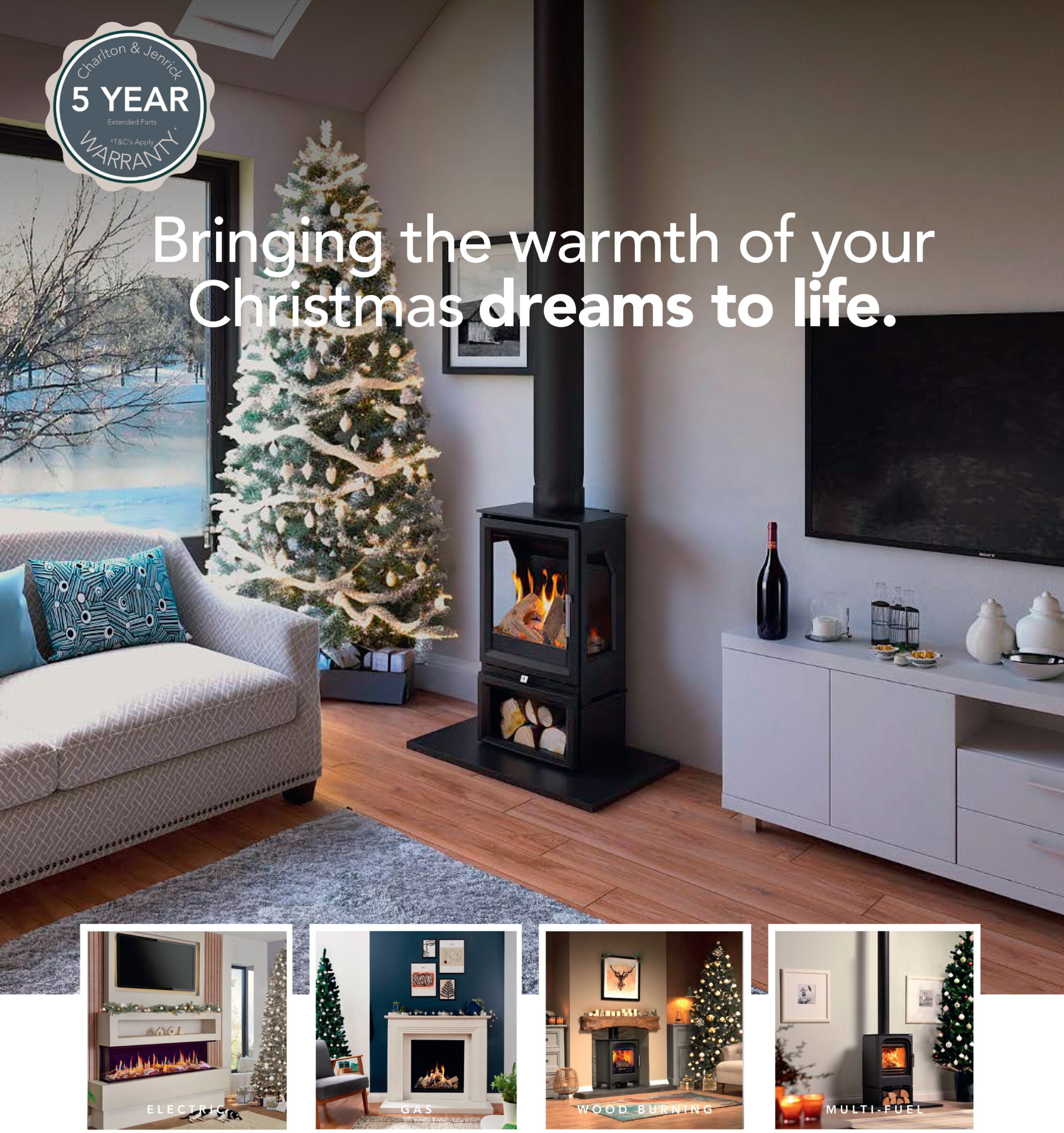
It's wise to start by assessing your project goals. For example, one of the main considerations when planning a low-energy project is whether you actually need any additional heat or if you're specifying a fire for the wow-factor value or ambience. In some other schemes, the fire or stove is the main source of heat in the living areas.

Consider the different options

There are many different modern fireplace and stove design options available, so you'll be able to find the perfect solution for your individual scheme. Consider single-sided models that have an open fire, or a two- or three-sided design to maximise the fire's presence in your room. Freestanding designs, or those that are suspended from the ceiling, are flexible as to where you place them – within reason – and they can be used to stylishly divide up a larger, open-plan space. Your choice of design will depend largely on the amount of room on offer, where in the space makes sense to position the fireplace and what your budget is. Heat output, ongoing maintenance and convenience should all be considered, too.

Creating wow factor

You can go for an inset model to create a minimalist look, or freestanding to really show off the fireplace and create a dramatic feature. Consider choosing a brightly-coloured design to make more of a focal point when the unit isn't lit. Many models also have complementary surrounds to provide different visual dynamics, which will add to the fire's overall presence in the space. Stone, slate or metal casing can be quite dramatic, too, and can help turn the fire into an architectural feature.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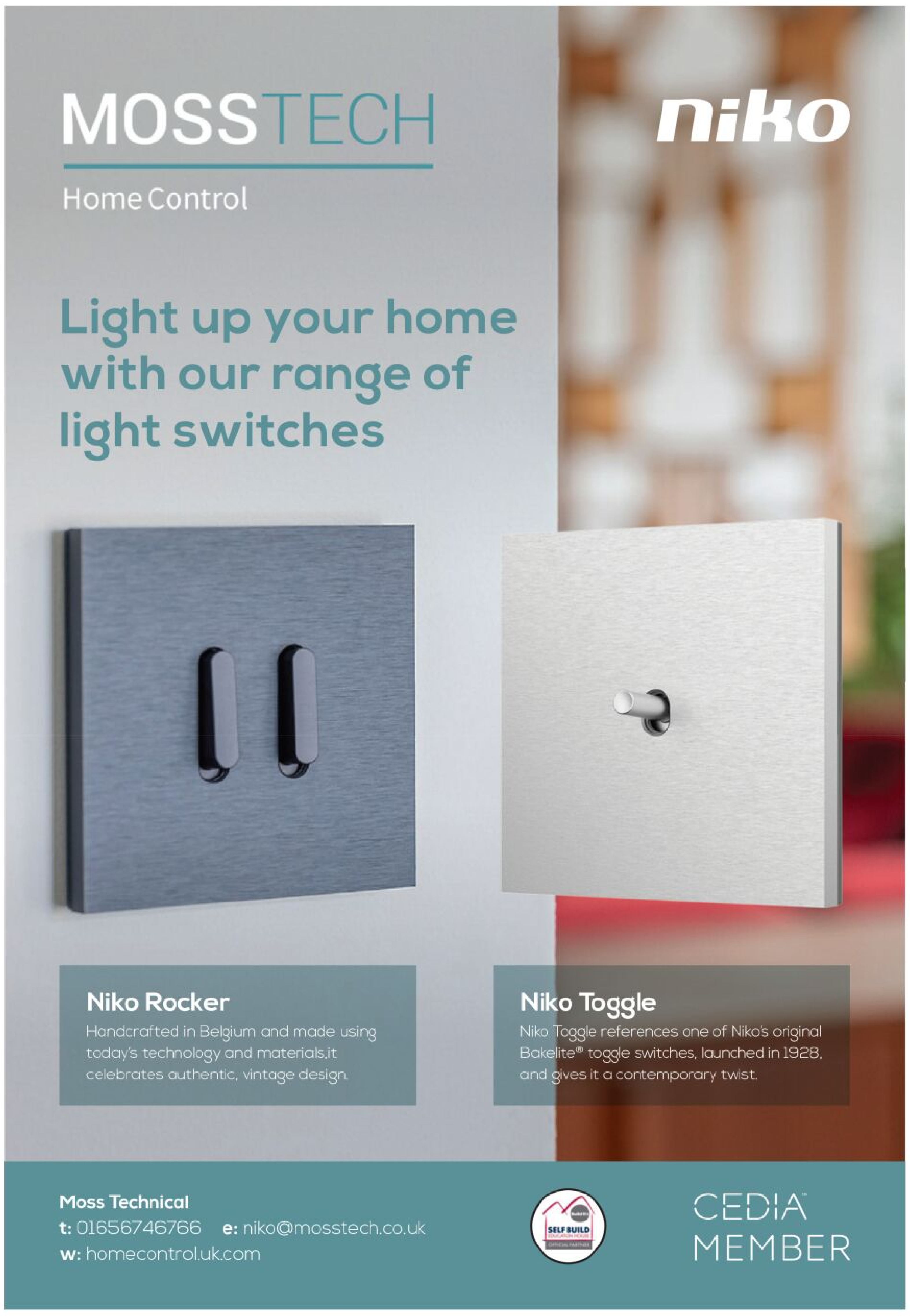

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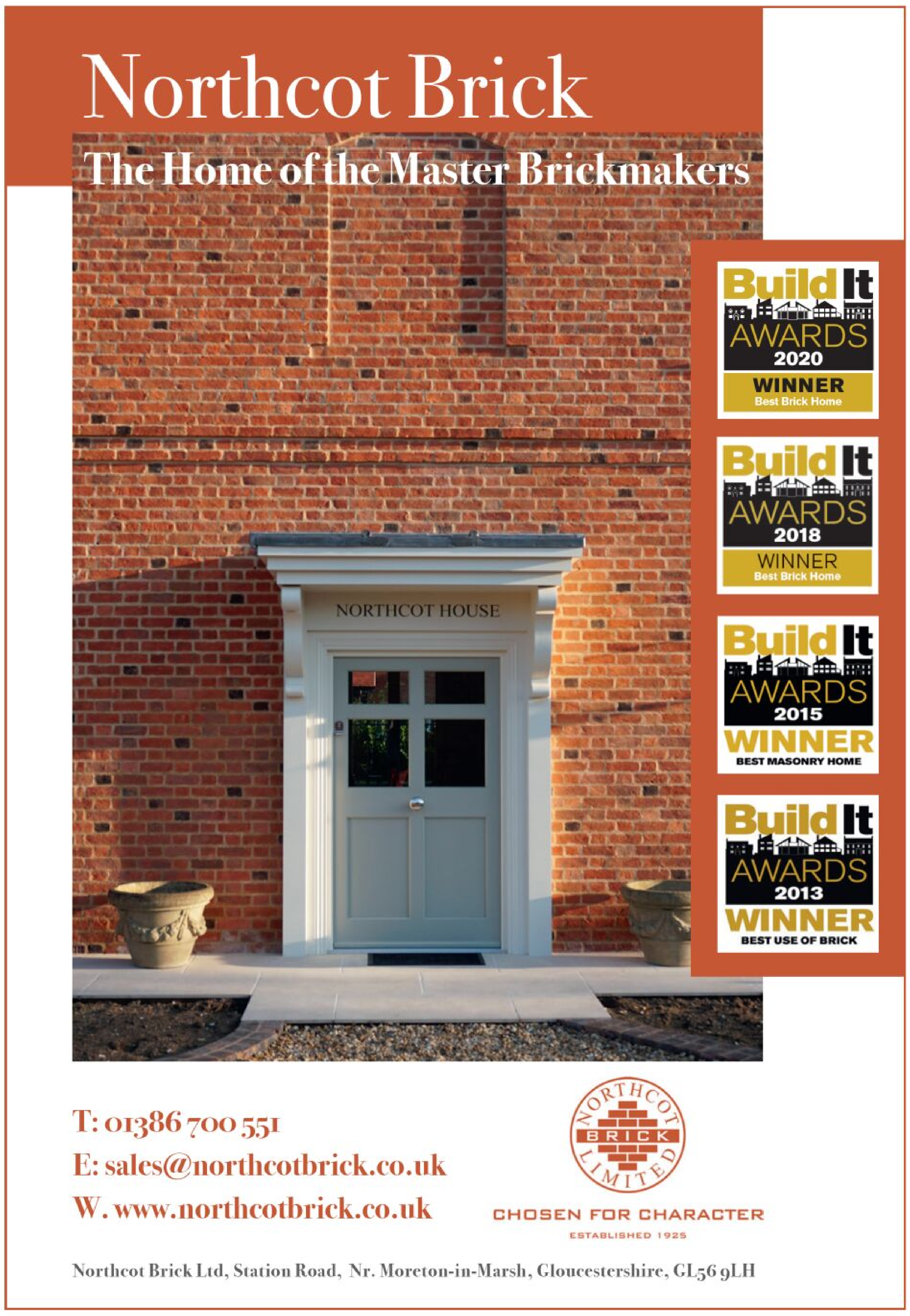

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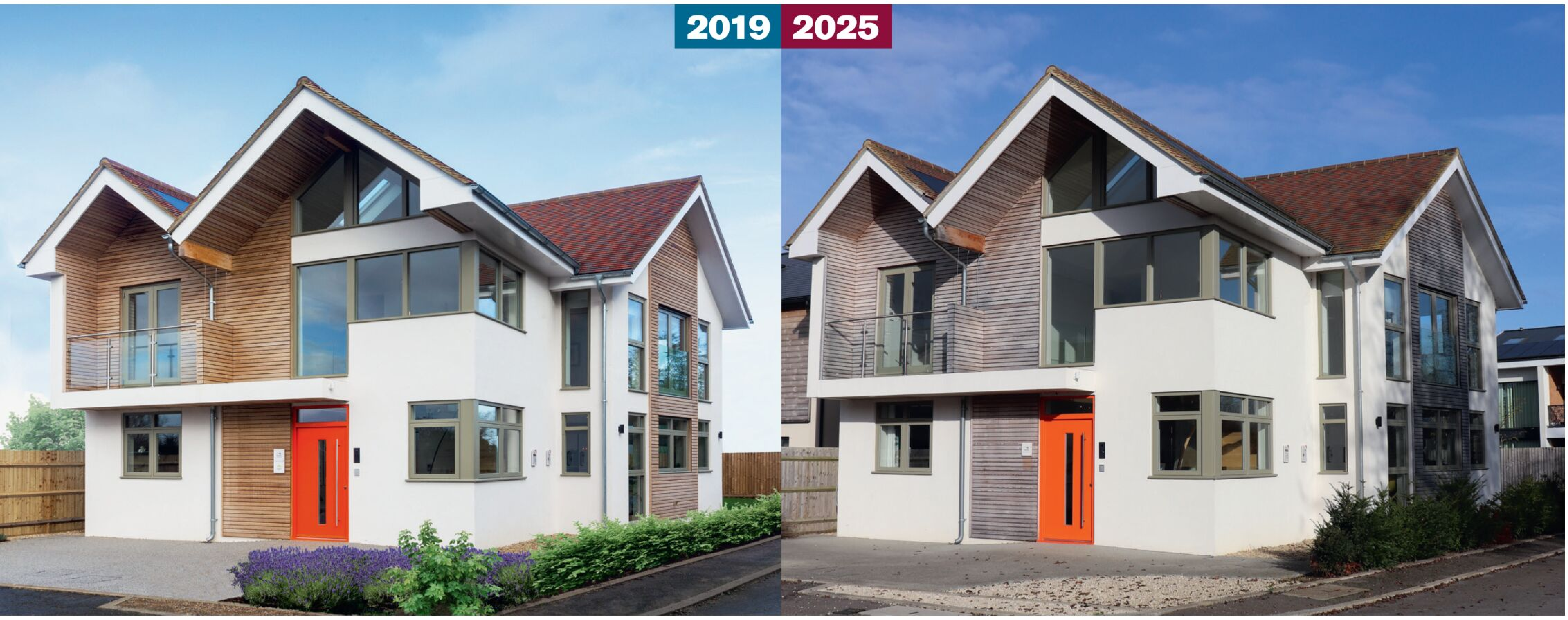


Above: The Build It House soon after construction, and as it stands today. The external finishes have mellowed, further enhancing the stylish design

THE BUILD IT EDUCATION HOUSE ... 5 YEARS ON

Five years after we completed the Build It House – and six since we came up with the concept design – Chris Batesmith revisits our key decisions and how our very own self build project has stood up to the test of time

Build It magazine's Self Build Education House was a first for any magazine: a real-life project, built purely with the aim to inform and inspire people who want to create an individual home. Completed in late 2019, just in time to celebrate Build It's 30th birthday, it remains a unique representation of our brand's commitment to delivering the most practical and focused content available for self builders and renovators.

After five years of being open to the public, the time is right to close the doors. The project has been a partnership between Build It and Graven Hill, the UK's largest self and custom build development. But this is by no means the end of the journey! The Build It House has been a lynchpin for our magazine and digital content ever since we first came up with the idea (all the way back in late 2017), and the lessons we've learned through the design, construction and occupancy phases have been invaluable.

From an editorial perspective, the Build It House is the gift that keeps on giving (albeit it a rather expensive one!). Regular readers will know we frequently refer back to the project in articles; whether for design ideas, practical tips or indicative costings (we're updating you on some of these in this article). There's nothing quite like experiencing a self build first-hand. Our project has given us a real-world touch point from which to explore the key decisions people face when creating a bespoke home and how to approach them. What's more, the quality design and specification we went for means it remains relevant, and will continue to inform great content for quite some time to come!

As with any build, we've had a few small issues to resolve over time (it's pleasing to report that our lead contractor has been attentive when things have gone wrong). But of all the partners, trades and suppliers involved in our project, to our knowledge, only two no longer operate (the roof tiler and the solar installer... which just happen to be two of the elements we had problems with).

So, five years after we completed the Build It House, just how well has it held up and would we do anything differently now (whether by choice or necessity)? Here, we're looking back at the our key design and specification decisions; how materials, fixtures and finishes have fared over time; what some of these features would cost to replicate now; and what we might rethink if we were to do it all again.

MORE ONLINE

For the full story of our pioneering self build project, a virtual tour and details of all the partners we worked with, visit **www.self-build.co.uk/ourhouse**

DESIGNING THE HOUSE

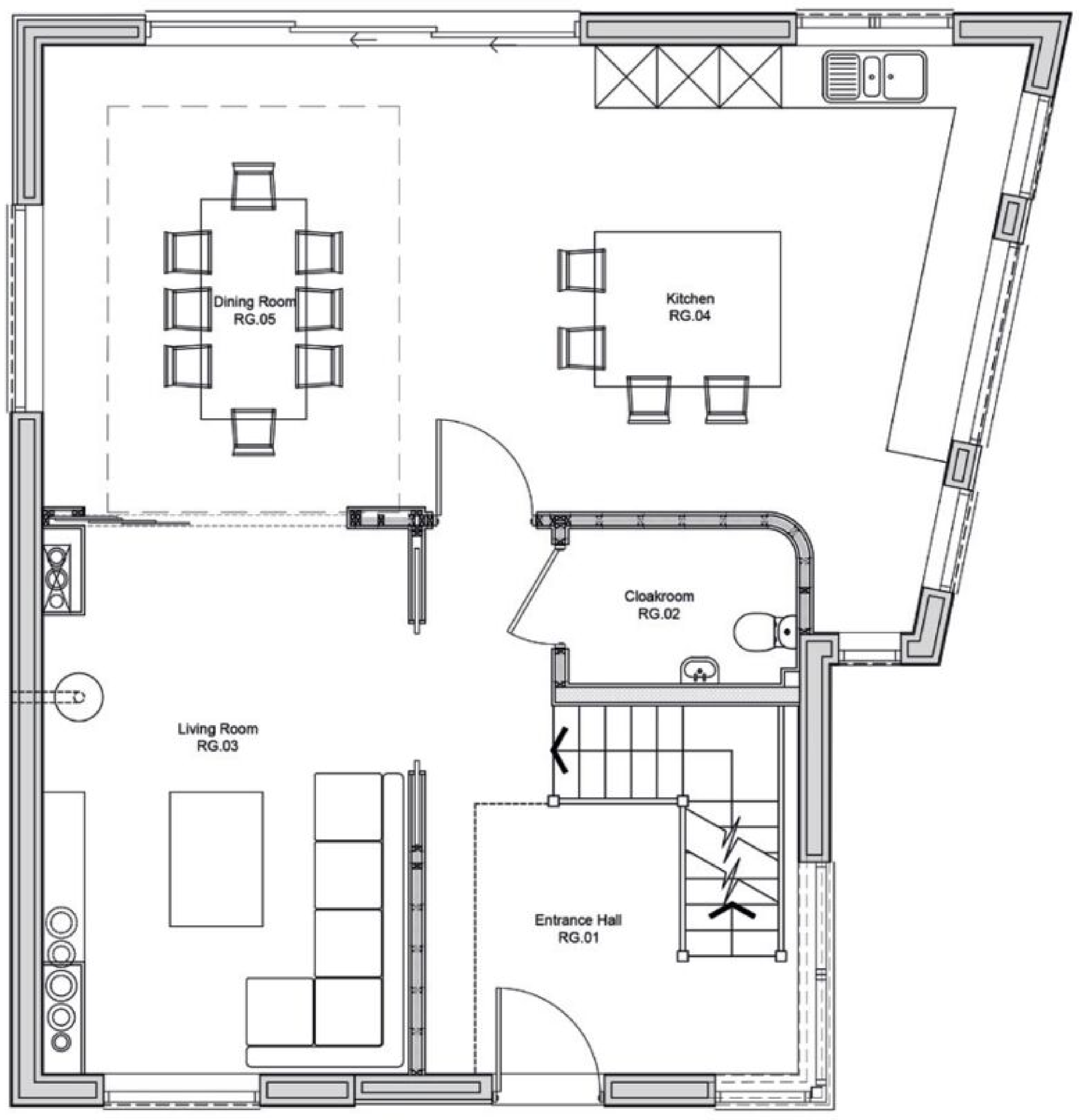
When we set out on our self build journey, we wanted to showcase what can be achieved, to help you understand the features and functionality that are important to you, and budget for your project accordingly. The design, then, had to wow: and wow it does! Opinder Liddar from Lapd Architects (lapdarchitects.co.uk) – who has been an expert for the magazine and Build It Live shows for many years – was the professional we trusted to translate our brief, and the parameters set in our Plot Passport at Graven Hill, into a high-quality new home that would go on to inspire and educate self builders for years to come.

Working together, we finessed the original brief and achieved a design that exceeded our expectations. Many features of the early sketch designs – including apex glazing in the southerly corner, roof overhangs for solar control, a mix of claddings and a broken-plan ground floor storey – went into the finished scheme. As with any design, there were areas to develop, but even at that early stage we knew we had the right architect for our project, and we still love the design and spaces we've created at the Build It House.

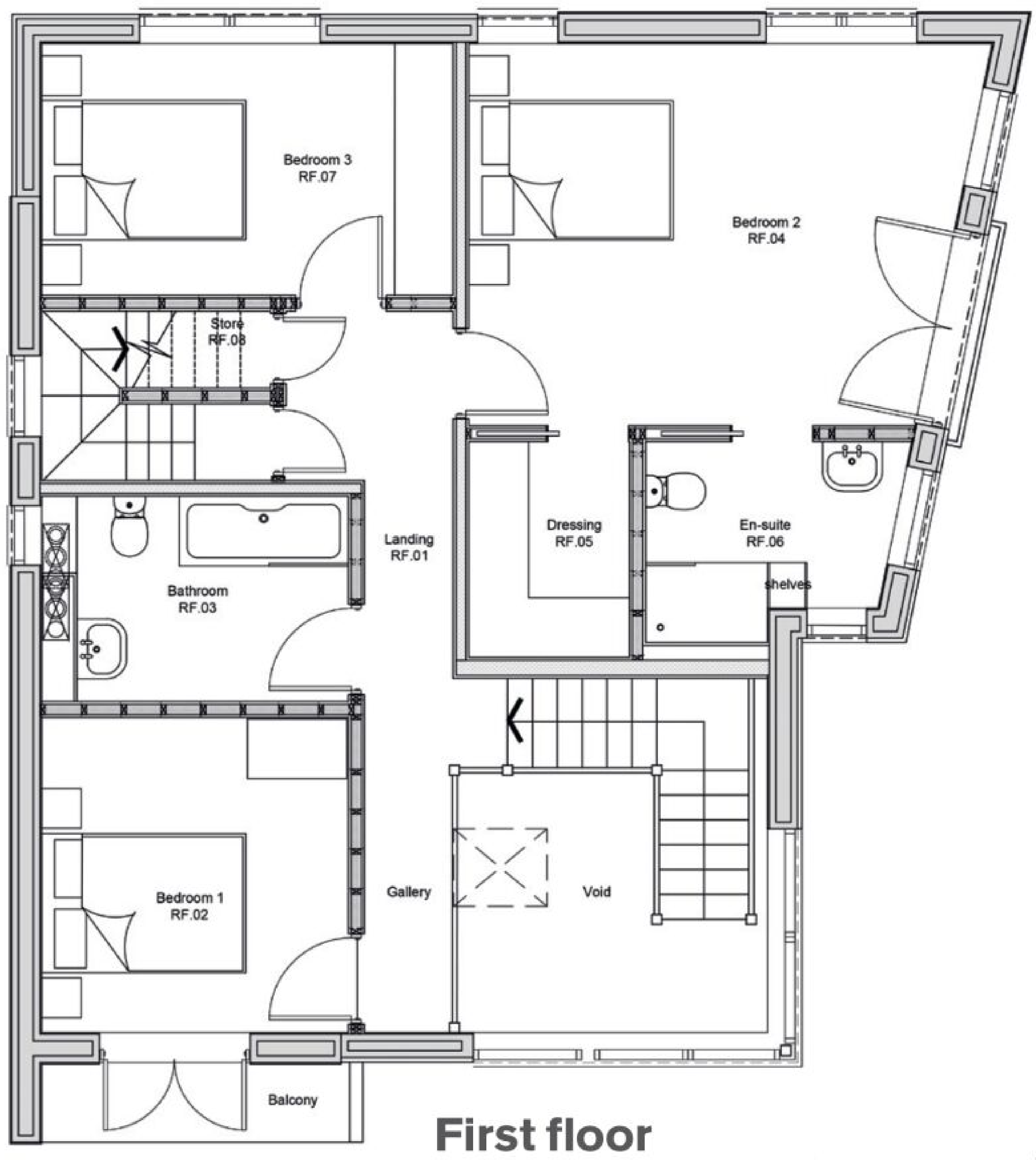
"We're really proud of it," agrees Opinder. "It's an exemplar of what you can achieve. I think the design holds strong, and will do so for a long time to come. The project has also had a positive impact on self build in the UK." This was recognised with a 2020 RICS Social Impact Award in the Residential category. Judge Phil Spencer said: "Build It designed and built a house to display contemporary design, construction methods and technological advancements – especially in sustainability – available to the average self builder. It's a fantastic development – huge congratulations!"

The project has gone on to inspire several of Lapd's clients, both at Graven Hill and beyond. But what's different now? "Our approach would be similar in 2024, but we can do more engagement, putting you virtually inside the house, for instance," says Opinder. On a practical level, there's greater scrutiny on design under the Building Safety Act. "You need to supply more detail about fire ratings, cavity barriers etc for timber cladding, for instance," says Opinder. "Thermal calculations and SAP ratings have changed, too, plus there's Part O of the Building Regs for overheating; this may have led us to deepen the roof overhangs or add external louvres at the Build It House."

Right: The ground and first floor plans for the Build It House. The initial design included an extra bedroom, but we decided to lose one to allow for more comfortable spaces and a wow-factor triple-height hallway. The basement storey houses the plant room and a cinema

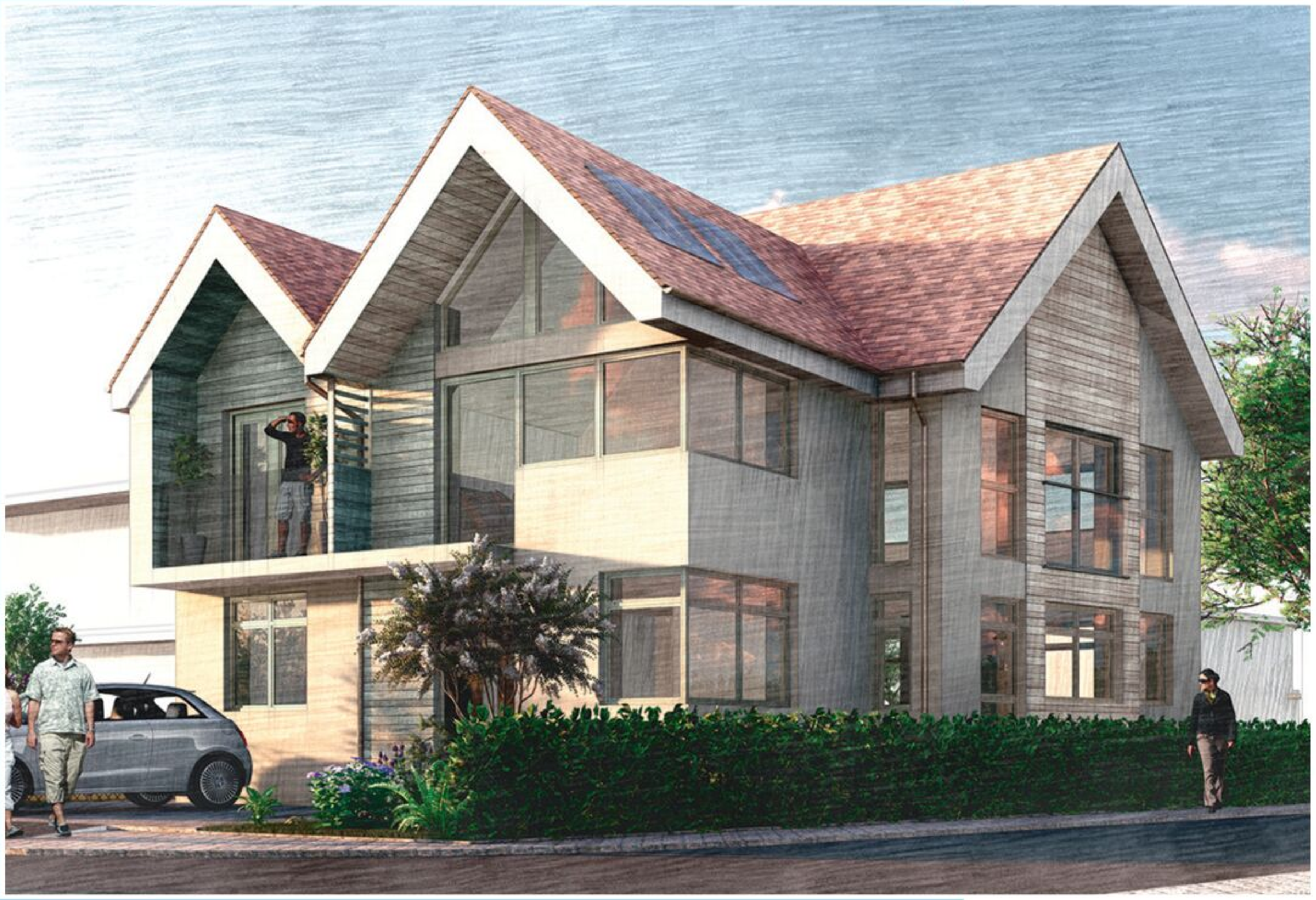


Ground floor



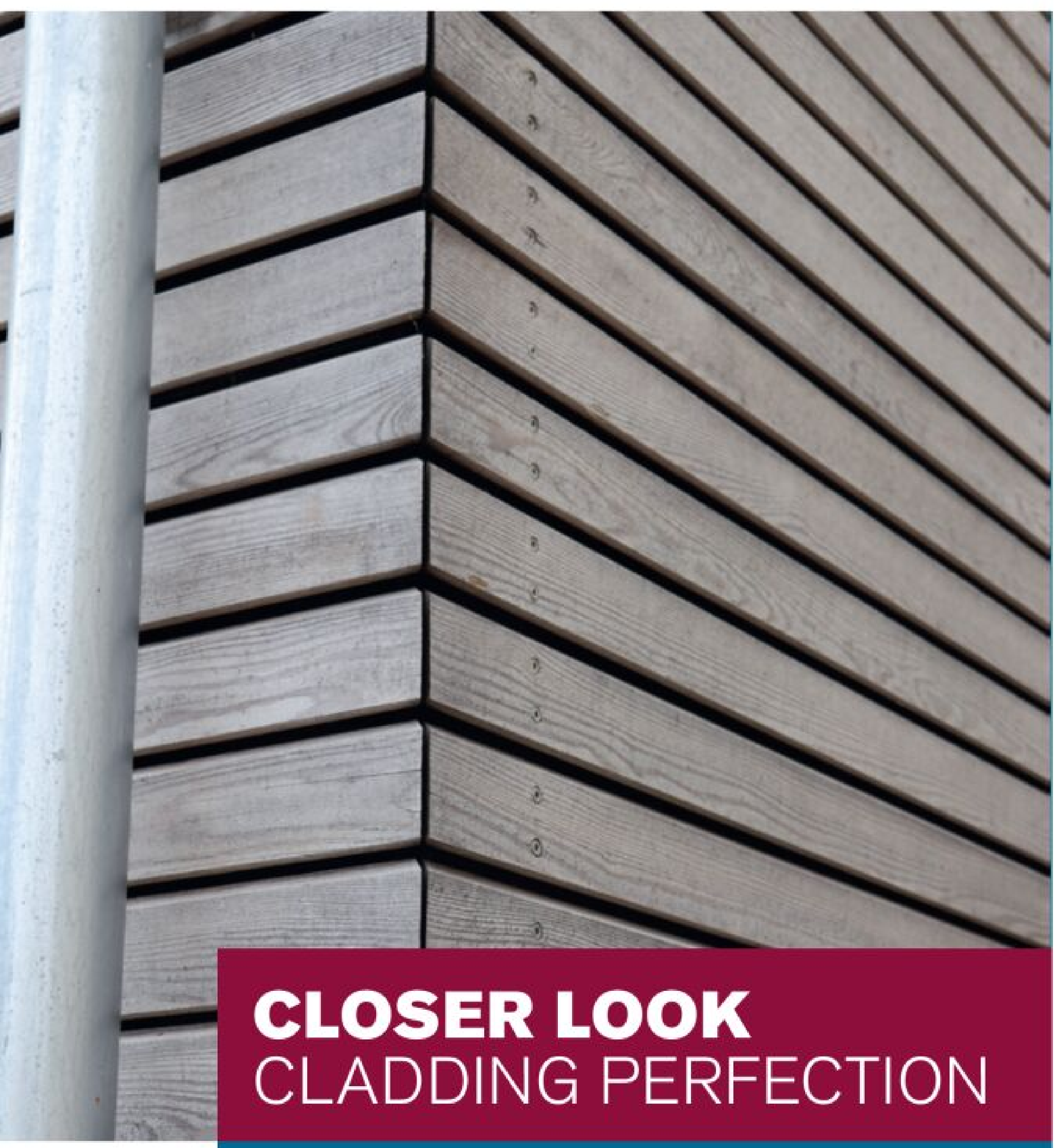
First floor

Below: A 3D sketch design of the Build It House, which Lapd produced to help us decide on the mix of claddings and roof tiles. The architects are now also able to provide virtual reality walkthroughs, giving self builders an even better understanding of what their finished home willbe like to live in before it's built



CLOSER LOOK
PROJECT ROUTE & CONTRACTS

We wanted to take a hands-on approach to running our build, without giving up the day job of running Build It's magazine, website and live events. So, we chose to self-manage the project alongside a main contractor – Drewett & Hunt (drewettandhunt.com), an Oxfordshire-based builder recommended to us by Lapd Architects. We engaged most of our trades and suppliers using a slightly amended version of a ContractStore.com contract. This was introduced to us by Self-Build Zone (selfbuildzone.com), who provided our site insurance and structural warranty. Self-Build Zone had a positive impact on our build, making suggestions through the technical audit and warranty inspections. What's more, having a 10 year structural warranty is absolutely critical now that the house is going to be sold: it's a requirement for mortgage lenders, so well worth the small one-off cost.



CLOSER LOOK CLADDING PERFECTION

Most of our cladding is in simple sections on a single elevation; but at the north-west corner, we opted for a wraparound effect, so we could showcase the difference between standard and hidden fix (Russwood recommended the Fassendenclip system, which was a bit more effort to install but has performed impeccably). At this corner, we were faced with the issue of how to fix the cladding into polystyrene ICF blocks, as there's no fixing strip embedded in the ICF here. Instead, we double-battened near the corner and opted for a mitred finish with a 10mm gap. It was labour-intensive (and the carpenters weren't convinced it would be stable enough over time) but produced an impressive effect. Happily, it looks as good today as when we installed it – the mitres still all match up perfectly! To do this reliably in a faster-grown larch (such as UK or European), you'd need a thicker profile for stability.

SUPERSTRUCTURE ICF & SIPS

We used a combination of structural systems for the main shell of the Education House, partly to fit our project goals, but also to enable us to showcase some of the modern options available to self builders.

ICF BASEMENT & WALLS

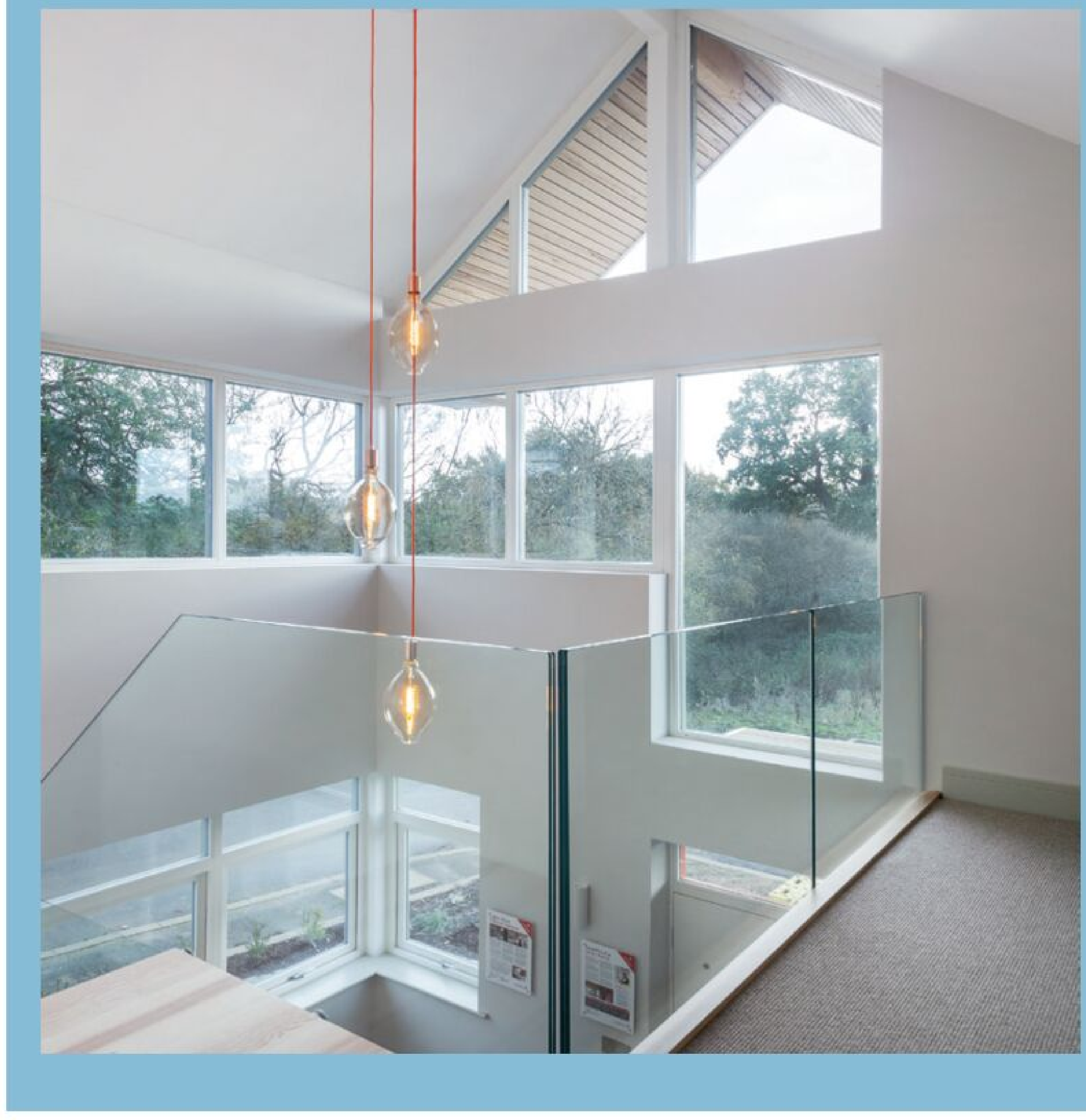
One of our biggest decisions was to build a basement, to maximise the potential of our relatively compact plot. Doing so gained us a full-height extra storey, which hosts our plant room (now essential in self builds, due to all the tech that goes into them) and a large home cinema that could also house a gym, study or other functions. The clay soil on our site meant it cost us just £30,000 more to construct a basement shell, rather than using engineered foundations.

Our Nudura walling system was provided by ICF Supplies (icfsuppliesltd.co.uk). Among its many benefits (find out more on page 64), ICF is straightforward and cost-effective to make waterproof. This was designed and installed by Surrey Basements; and it's now a requirement to involve a waterproofing specialist on any basement project. Our system combines tanking with an eggcrate-like cavity drainage membrane and sump pump. We've found we do need that pump, as water collects in it via the drainage channels. It needs annual servicing, a bit like a boiler.

ICF provides a high-quality building with plenty of thermal mass for a comfortable internal environment. We've made one upgrade to the shell in 2023, retrofitting an AeroBarrier (aerobarrieruk.co.uk) airtightness seal, applied via a misting spray. This has greatly improved airtightness and further reduced heating loads. But perhaps the best feature is the calm, fresh ambience: using ICF has given us a very quiet house!

SIPS ROOF

Our choice of SIPCOs (thesipcompany.com) structural insulated panels (SIPs) for the roof was vital for creating the breathtaking (if tricky to clean) vaulted hallway, which has inspired many visitors' projects. The strong, slim pre-insulated panels also enabled a habitable loft space. We left the attic unfinished until recently, so visitors could see the SIPs panels in action, but it's now plasterboarded, skimmed and ready to move into.



Our only regret from combining two build methods is that we didn't appoint a single engineer to do the structural design – instead, we had one for each system. SIPCO ultimately resolved this for us, but it did result in some complex and costly engineering for the attic floor structure. Ensuring one person is responsible for the whole job was a major lesson that now goes into our Virtual Self Build Training courses (**self-build.co.uk/training**)!

EXTERNAL WALL FINISHES

One tricky choice for self builders is the palette of finishes. We selected a mix of K-Rend (k-rend.co.uk) silicone render, direct-applied to the ICF to minimise wall build-up, and Siberian larch in a rainscreen cladding profile from Russwood (russwood.co.uk). We did have some initial concerns with rainwater splashes on the warm white K-Rend, but these cleaned off easily and it still looks fresh.

For the larch, Russwood recommended a factory coating of SiOO:X, which accelerates the weathering process – and it's been a great success. We've not suffered from the 'teenage years' you can get with timber cladding, and it's close to reaching its final patina. We now know we could have applied SiOO:X to the exposed glulam ridge beam, too, to help ensure that it weathers in tandem with the larch cladding. Due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, there's a ban on importing Siberian larch, and UK stocks are long gone. "It's a beautiful, highly durable and versatile product, and there's not really a direct substitute," says Russwood's Morgan Corrieri. "We always talk with clients about what they like about Siberian larch, such as the figuring or durability, to identify the best alternative for their needs." Popular options include the company's Architect Select larch, which is supplied in 92mm x 24mm profiles for stability, and thermally-modified Thermopine, available in 92mm x 20mm profiles.

Our Siberian larch cost £61.50/m^2 in 2019 (supply only); when stocks were last available, it was £118/m^2 (the war caused a big price hike). Architect Select is £70/m^2 and Thermopine £63/m^2 (all prices are with a SiOO:X coating).

WINDOWS & DOORS

Choosing windows is a critical decision on any project. Not only do they need to look the part, but they must also support your goals for the performance of your home (and not just from an energy efficiency perspective). We selected Kloeber (kloeber.co.uk) to supply and install our double-glazed timber windows and French doors, which achieve a U-value of 1.3 W/m^{2}K, as well as providing the FunkyFront door (timber with a steel core) for our contractor to install – and we're delighted with them. In particular, the finish on the windows is still pristine; we've not had to repaint anything yet. "On average in the UK we'd expect it to be at least five years before you need to do anything to a factory-painted window," says Kloeber's Matt Higgs. We chose a green-grey finish for the frames, which we'd do again, as it adds a bit of warmth compared to standard options like anthracite.

Little has changed with the product itself since we installed it. "We've allowed for greater cill projections as standard, because modern construction and Building Regs mean you need to fit windows quite far back into the opening now," says Matt. "We would also recommend a solar control coating on the glazed corner gable, due to the new Building Regs Part O (a 2022 reg that aims to minimise overheating). That said, it's a hallway rather than a bedroom or living area, so any overheating wouldn't be too much of an issue." We did consider this, installing a Velux rooflight at the top of the triple-height hallway, which gives us purge ventilation if we do ever need to cool the zone.

Our windows, French doors and FunkyFront door came to a total of £27,500 including installation. "Rises in materials prices mean you can expect to pay another 30% in 2024," says Matt. "But for anyone concerned about maintenance, the timber windows and doors in the Build It House will probably need virtually nothing doing to them for another five years or more."

Left & below left: The paintwork on our Kloeber timber windows still looks as pristine as it did five years ago, allaying the traditional concerns over ongoing upkeep

TOPPING OUT
ROOF TILES & SOLAR

Our roof is topped with a characterful handmade clay tile blend from UK maker Dreadnought (dreadnought-tiles.co.uk), installed by a local roof contractor. Our topping of Country Brown, Brown Heather and Red Sanded has already developed a pleasing patina with age. The mix was hand-blended on site, which adds to labour costs; the alternative is to have them pre-blended for £130 per 1,000.

The only issues we've had with the roof are down to workmanship rather than the products. One gutter valley failed, with the remedial works taking longer than we'd have liked. It's sorted now, but we should have trusted our gut and had the roofer rip it out and redo it while we were still in the main build phase. We also had a leak at the flashings for the solar panels, where the flashings weren't properly stuck down. Again, this is now resolved.

There have been a couple of tile breakages. "We wouldn't really expect to see this," says Dreadnought's Dana Patrick-Smith. "It may be that one or two have been compromised by taking a bit of a knock, either in transport or perhaps when trades have returned for repairs. Maybe they've not used a proper ladder, or even dropped tools on the tiles. It might then have taken a while for them to break afterwards."

Our clay tile blend cost £6,281 on a supply-only basis (including valley/gable/ridge tiles and haulage). Dana says prices have gone up by about 60% in the six years since our order.

One disappointment is the battery for the solar PV, as we don't have data on how effective it is. It's unsatisfying as a self builder to spend £7,000 on tech and not know how it's performing!

SLIDING DOORS

To achieve that coveted house-to-garden connection, we chose a high-quality, slimline theEDGE2.0 sliding door from IDSystems (idsystems.co.uk), which operates just as smoothly as the day it was first installed. IDSystems were very supportive, helping us settle on a twin-track setup (with one fixed plant-on panel) rather than a deeper triple track, which gives us more usable internal footprint. Its install team was also very helpful in deciding how to deep to locate the door within the opening, to get the right look where it meets our render and timber claddings.

A premium product, theEDGE2.0 is still very popular today, although there have been a few changes. We were able to specify a U-value of 1.4 W/m^{2}K, but updated Building Regs mean today our door would need to hit 1.2. "To achieve this with theEDGE2.0, we would specify Cuin glass, which is double glazed but has a transparent polymer interlayer to increase the performance of the glass," explains IDSystems' David Clarke.

One regret is not having a key lock cylinder to the external side of the slider, as the only other entrance is the front door. However, as David points out: "One of the reasons for this was security during the build. If it had been on a well-populated part of Graven Hill, with fencing on all three sides, maybe it would have been different." In 2019, our twin-track theEDGE2.0 system with standard laminated glass cost £11,344. With an upgrade to Cuin glass, today we could expect to pay £12,596.

COMFORTABLE LIVING HEATING & VENTILATION

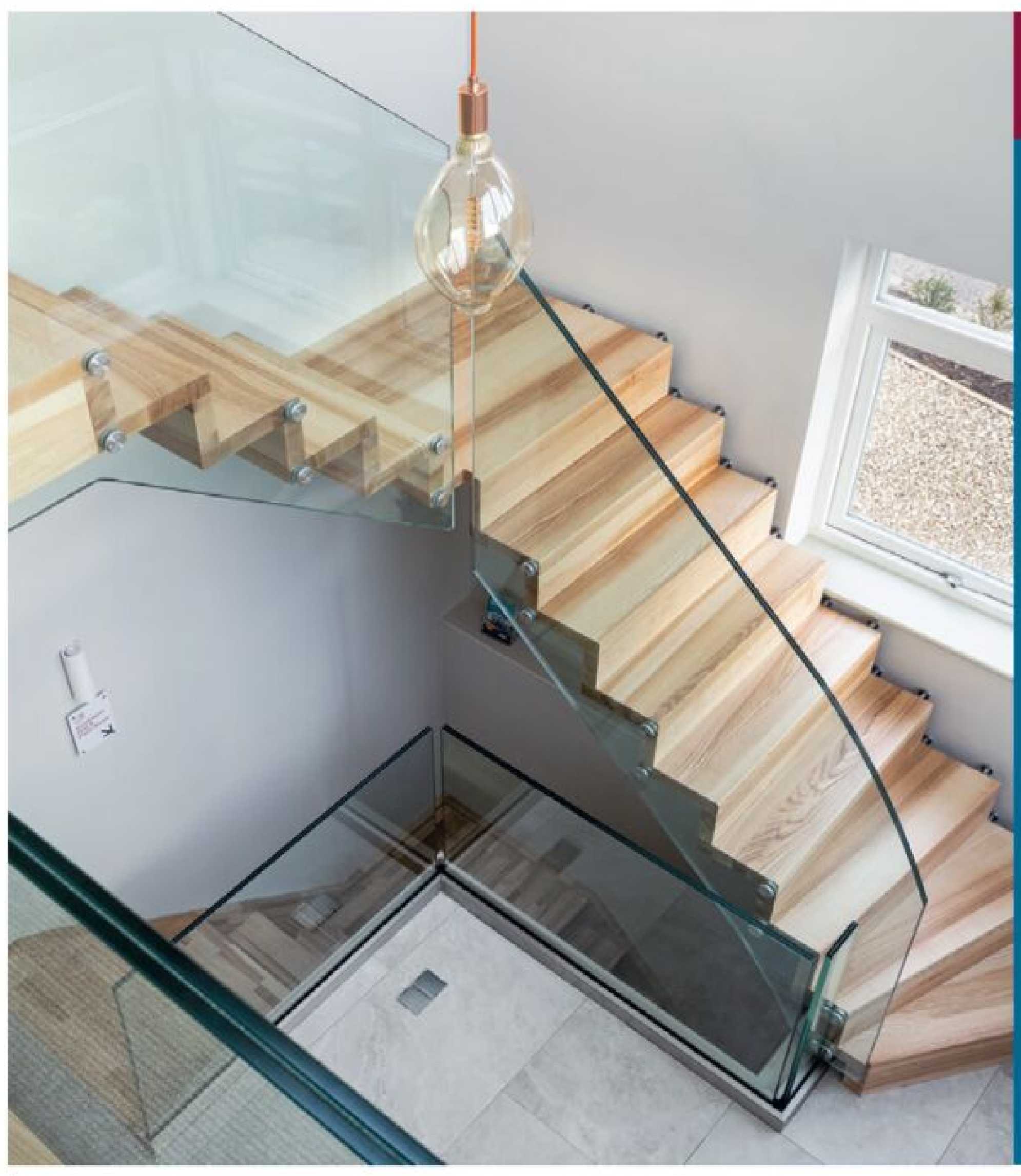
We wanted to create an enjoyable, efficient home that would deliver great air quality and keep a lid on energy bills. To that end, we installed Total Home Environment's (totalhome.co.uk) heat pump ventilation (HPV) and hot water (HPW) solution. The cost of living crisis means our bills have been a bit higher than we expected – but there's no doubt HPV is a great choice for high-performing homes.

Some visitors have been surprised by the size and amount of ducting for the HPV (deliberately left exposed in the basement). This was partly our fault: we moved the plant room late on, so the planned left-hand unit had to become a right-hand unit. This goes to show how important it is to let trades and suppliers know about changes promptly! Any noise transfer fears we had with the ducts/vents have proven unfounded.

The main bathroom, ensuite and WC all have underfloor heating from Nu-Heat (nu-heat.co.uk). At first floor level this is laid in a Screedflo (screedflo.co.uk) low-decibel screed, which is very effective – stamp your foot upstairs, and you'll barely hear it below.

The house stays at a very comfortable temperature with the HPV and the highly controllable Jotul (jotul.co.uk) gas stove, which the Graven Hill team love for a boost of warmth (the house has also been their marketing suite). Under the forthcoming Future Homes Standard, however, self builders won't be able to connect to gas. "It's also got quite expensive," says Mark Ryan from Jotul UK, who recommends pellet stoves as a future-proof option. "You get controllability with pellets, which is vital in a well-insulated house. I think it's the final evolution of the woodburner; more efficient and producing 25% less particulate matter. Plus pellet stoves are easy to install, with direct-air or balanced flue options, and a simple three-pin plug or fused spur to run the fans and elements." A good-quality model costs around £3,000; comparable to the £3,491 we paid for our gas stove.

Above: View through the internal glazed doors and into the sitting room, which hosts a stylish Jotul GF373 balanced flue gas stove



CLOSER LOOK INTERNAL FIT-OUT

Choosing the right staircase is a big deal for any self build project. For the vaulted hallway, Meinolf Kloepping from Kloepping TSS (kloeppingtss.co.uk) suggested a contemporary, solid ash feature flight, which we paired with a glass balustrade. Cheaper than oak but just as textural and durable, it sets the tone for our interior decor choices. We worried about wear and tear, but the very minor scratches a timber stair develops over time simply add patina. Installed for £15,600 in 2019, it would cost something like £17,000-£20,000 now, depending on final spec. We later added an ash handrail to the lower section of the flight. "It's a personal preference," says Meinolf. "Some people feel uncomfortable with just glass; but we had two layers of 10mm-thick toughened, laminated glass with a 1.5mm foil. This is fine for building control; even if one breaks, the other will stay in tact."

A feature of our internal layout is the SF20 internal glazed room divider (£2,750 back then; £4,100 in today's money), separating the sitting room from the kitchen-diner for a versatile floor plan. "Internal glazing was an afterthought for many people back in 2019 but, since the Build It House, is now a massive part of new build and extension projects," says David from IDSystems. "The dream of open-plan living is different to reality. Internal room dividers mean you can retain that bright open feel, but separate zones when necessary."

We also remain very pleased with the Howdens kitchen, which replicates German handle-less designs at a fraction of the cost. We upgraded this with wow-factor workops from Granite House (granitehouse.co.uk) – including a waterfall design at the island – which still look like new. Another great choice was the weighty fire-rated internal doors from JB Kind (jbkind.com). These are satisfying to use and better acoustically than standard products; plus the oak veneers remain in perfect nick.

CREATING A MODERN SMART HOME

With the exception of the attic, the Build It House is a fully-wired, modern smart home. This means we have complete centralised control over our living environment – with the opportunity to set different lighting moods, manage the heating system, control shading and more from intuitive control panels or a smart device. There's even an 'all off/on' function on the switch next to the front door, giving us pre-programmed security and welcome home scenes.

We specified the Niko system from Moss Technical, which is reliable and popular with visitors. A major benefit is that it offers free updates to add and enhance functionality – without needing to bring in an engineer. So, it actually gets better with age. "That's the beauty of smart home," explains Andy Moss from Moss Technical. "If there's an update, you get a notification on the app. Accept it and, instantly, you've got that capability."

One thing that is different in 2024 is that you no longer need Niko's Digital Black control screen in every heating zone. "You'd still go with Digital Black for open-plan areas, but not in secondary bedrooms, bathrooms etc," says Andy. "That's because every switch now has built-in temperature and humidity sensors, so you don't need a separate thermostat or control in every room." There's also more choice over the look of the switches, including toggle and rocker versions, as well as the option for robust Zigbee wireless switches – so it would be easy for a future owner to add smart functionality to the attic, too.

Our smart home system cost £47,233 back in 2019, including installation (just over £10,000) and almost £15,000 worth of Amina hidden ceiling speakers (incidentally, the bass on these is very powerful, which your trades need to consider). On the Niko system itself (£12,779 of our spend), prices have gone up by about 15% since 2019 – although we would probably pay a similar amount overall today, as we'd be able to replace some of the Digital Blacks with cheaper smart switches.

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Class Q barn conversions

Planning expert Julia Riddle reveals how this permitted development right can make it easier to create a bespoke home in the countryside

Above & inset: After his plans to build from scratch were rejected by the planners, Build It reader Jamie Davison realised he could convert a barn his brother had purchased, under Class Q rules. The stunning new home features double-height glazing, vaulted ceilings and timeless interiors

Class Q is the provision that allows for the change of use of an agricultural building to a residential property, without the need for full planning permission. These allowances have been in place for some years now, however the parameters of what can be achieved have changed over time, giving greater development opportunities. The most recent updates came into effect in May 2024.

The provision is set out in the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (as amended). These regulations also outline the updated parameters for what can be undertaken under Class Q.

The legislation can provide great opportunity for the delivery of new homes in rural areas, particularly where they might not normally be approved through a full planning application. It's worth considering this route when looking for sites and considering options for development in the country – it could be the best way to realising your dream home, with the added benefit of a more streamlined approval process. Here, I'm exploring the kind of properties and projects eligible for Class Q conversion and the key considerations to bear in mind.

Right: This barn received Class Q permitted development rights rights to convert it into a four-bed property

Key qualifying criteria

There are certain conditions that must be met for a building to be eligible for conversion through this route. Principally, the building must be part of an agricultural unit. The changes to the rules in 2024 have given more flexibility as to the use of the building itself – it's not uncommon for agricultural structures to have been re-purposed in some way, for example, and the updated legislation no longer requires the property to be in a state of agricultural use. There are some nuances around this which should be checked over in each unique case.

It's important to note that these provisions do not apply where a building is listed, or located in a national park, area of outstanding natural beauty or a conservation area. Additionally, the structure must be substantially intact – a formal survey is likely to be needed to demonstrate or prove this as part of a planning process.

If the structure was built under permitted development rights (under Part 6 of the GPDO) then it's not eligible for change until it is over 10 years since it was erected. Additionally, if a barn was built, even with planning permission, it will need to have been in place for 10 years from July 2023 before it qualifies for conversion.

If the associated agricultural land is subject of a tenancy, the tenant needs to be given one year notice

Above: This Class Q barn conversion designed by VESP Architects (www.vesp.uk) involved reconfiguring a series of redundant, single-storey buildings, turning them into one large home. The material palette includes modern larch timber cladding and local granite to complement the rural surroundings

or there needs to be an agreement that the land is no longer required for agricultural use. This arrangement can't be based only on the desire to pursue Class Q.

There are some fairly complex and detailed transitional arrangements, plus various circumstances where some changes may still be possible under the pre-May 2024 regulations. So, if you're unsure if your building qualifies, it's best to seek professional advice concerning your specific circumstances to ensure compliance.

What are the limitations?

There are limits to the extent of development that can be achieved through this route, allowing for up to 10 new homes to be built on a single farm holding. There are also size thresholds that apply as follows:

- The floor space of any dwellinghouse developed under Class Q cannot exceed 150m^2.
- The cumulative number of separate dwellinghouses cannot exceed a total of 10.
- The cumulative floor space of the dwellinghouses cannot exceed 1,000 m^2 in total.

An extension can be sought of up to 4m to the rear of the building, if there is existing hard standing. This can only be achieved as part of the Class Q submission and cannot be added to a structure previously converted through this route where this was not part of the original submission. Under these provisions, 10 units can be spread across more than one building in any agricultural unit. The Class Q rights also allow for:

- Installation or replacement of external walls, doors, windows, roofs, drainage and any services – under the condition that these should not protrude more than 0.2m from the existing building.
- Partial demolition as required.
- Internal structural works, including insertion of mezzanine or upper floors, internal walls etc.
- If these parameters are not adhered to, the development will not be accepted through the Class Q route and will require full planning permission.

The process requires specific information to be provided to the council. If you're not sure if your building or plans meet the qualifying criteria, it would be beneficial to seek professional advice or some confirmation from the council through a pre-application process. The submission of a prior approval application to your local planning authority to secure the Class Q change must be done before any works are undertaken.

When you submit your prior approval, the council will look at the design and appearance of the changes proposed; it's always assumed that in this unique type of development, these will be inkeeping with the agricultural look of the building and surrounding character of the area. In the case of a Class Q proposal, the council will also review access, potential highway issues, flood risks, contamination matters, availability of water and sewage treatment arrangements, impact on the surrounding area and the provision of adequate light to all habitable rooms.

This process takes up to 56 days. After which, if there's no decision, the change is accepted. Although, it's always worth seeking confirmation before starting works!

KEEP IN MIND...

- Buildings converted under Class Q may still be liable for CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) charges. This is something to be aware of when submitting or when purchasing land with permission under this process.

- If you're buying a plot permitted through this route, it's likely that you will be limited in terms of the changes that can be made to any existing approved plans. There may need to be a new submission to achieve changes accepted through Class Q. It's recommended to check this with a professional before purchasing a plot to avoid disappointment.

JULIA RIDDLE

Julia Riddle is a planning consultant with experience in advising on a range of commercial and residential development. She runs Castle Planning (www.castleplanning.uk) and has written guidance to inform the national approach to Custom and Self Build and is a member of the Right to Build Task Force.

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MARK WATTS

Above: This charming oak frame home was built on Oakwrights' (www.oakwrights.co.uk) custom build site, Webbs Meadow in Herefordshire. With planning permission and utilities already in place, the homeowner, Caroline, project managed the build herself – tailoring the home to meet her exact requirements

Understanding custom build design codes & plot passports

Architect **Julian Owen** reveals how a custom build site could fast track the design and development of your dream bespoke home

Wouldn't it be great if everyone that wanted to self build could just look in the local paper or wander into an estate agent, find their ideal plot straight away and then get on with creating their dream home? Until relatively recently this seemed like a pipe dream, because any land suitable for a new house almost always ends up in the hands of large-scale developers. But in 2015, legislation was introduced in England and Wales to compel councils to change their planning rules and ensure that more self build plots would become available. The process has been slow, but in the intervening years planning policy has developed. We're now at the point where most councils are required to provide a certain number of self build plots as a condition of planning approvals for large estates.

Some planners are worried that these custom build sites will generate a disproportionate amount of extra work for them and, crucially, that they will lose control over the design quality of the new homes. Fortunately, there are some well-established safeguards that help to deal with these concerns without stifling your ability to create a distinctive design. These are represented by two types of document that are integrated into the planning approval process, called design codes and plot passports.

What are design codes?

The concept behind design codes is familiar to planners, because for a long time, similar documents have been created by councils as part of their planning policies. These guides set out the ground rules for the design of new housing developments that might be made up of hundreds of new homes. They're used to clarify how the design of streets and large estates should be approached, often with detailed guidance on the range of materials to be used, the pattern of road layouts, the massing of buildings and the nature of landscaping required. The earliest version of this type of document that I have come across is The Essex Design Guide, which first appeared in 1973 – so it's by no means a new idea.

This concept is now being applied to smaller-scale custom build sites, some of which might have just a

WHAT GOES INTO A DESIGN CODE?

They could be anything from six to 60 pages, depending on the scale of the development and level of control required, covering things such as:

- **The relationship** with established council planning policy and the areas surrounding the site.
- **Where the code applies**, which is particularly important if there are different codes covering separate areas on one large site.
- **The vision** for the site including its intended character, identity and aesthetic aspirations.
- **Objectives** such as encouraging a mix of affordable housing, shared ownership, co-housing, rented self builds and giving priority for first time buyers or those with a local connection. Plus, the integration of existing features, such as buildings with heritage value and the landscape.
- **Off plot rules** such as those for new landscaping, trees, species of wildflowers, street paving type, necessary green areas, roads and cycle paths and guidelines surrounding who will manage them.
- **House types** that are encouraged on the site, perhaps with some typical examples.
- **The level of privacy** required and the relationships between houses, including building distances.
- **A palette of materials** that are acceptable, sometimes including colours and hues.
- **The level of energy efficiency** and sustainable construction requirements, as well as details of water and waste management setups.
- **The number of cars** allowed, or for community projects, how car sharing schemes can be used to reduce parking spaces and whether there can be communal parking areas in place.

Above: The Meldrum House Estate Development from Cairnrowan Custom Homes (www.cairnrowancustomhomes.com) is a 2023 Build It Award-winning custom build site in Aberdeenshire, featuring 42 plots ranging from £180,000-£440,000. Each site is sold as a serviced self build plot, with the minimum size being a generous half-acre

Right: Designed by Border Oak (www.borderoak.com) on serviced self build plot Mortimer Meadow, this home sits within a conservation area. The oak frame company offered the opportunity for purchasers to alter proposed designs to their liking, providing they stuck to an established palette of materials

handful of plots. The big difference is that rather than the planners approving the detailed design of every individual house on an estate, the council agrees that if the design code is followed, any new self build scheme will get fast-tracked approval. This approach represents a major relaxation of the powers that planning departments are used to having over the minutiae of the design of buildings. Without it, custom build sites would be mired in bureaucracy, as each self builder tried to get their individual schemes approved in the traditional way. The planners would then have to work through, say, 30 wildly different proposals on the same site, each incompatible with the others. Anyone committing to buy a plot would have no idea what their neighbours were going to build, or how successful their own application might be. So, pre-agreed ground rules remove many of the risks faced by self builders when buying a plot.

They're also a way of making life easier for the planning officers, because the developers/enablers of the custom build site do all the heavy lifting. They prepare the design code and then check that all the proposed plans and elevations comply before they're passed on to get a rubber stamp from the planners. The council still has a lot of control over the appearance of the homes because they agree and approve the content of the code in advance. So, if it's a sensitive site, for example in a conservation area or next to the green belt, they can increase the number of restrictions to an appropriate level – perhaps by limiting the range of materials that can be used, or the height of the roofs. Alternatively, if there's nothing particularly distinctive about a location, they can use a light touch code that allows considerable freedom of design. In these cases, there won't be any existing neighbours to be disgruntled by a row of new homes that all look totally different to each other. Anyone who buys a plot on such a site does so in the knowledge that they have a free hand to indulge their ideas and so does everyone else on their new street. On a large-scale custom build site there may be several design codes to give separate areas their own identity.

What are plot passports?

Each passport describes the relationship the new house is to have with those that surround it and how it will fit into the overarching design code – taking the general principles established and applying them to individual homes. They're prepared by the custom build enabler and given the nod by the council – but deal with the nitty gritty which does not need to be highly scrutinised by planners. There's a plan included indicating the zone within which the house can be built, usually by a dotted line with space around it for garden and a bit of distance between neighbours. The rules that it sets out can cover a host of details, such as parking requirements, the maximum

WHAT'S INCLUDED IN A PLOT PASSPORT?

These are usually much shorter than design codes, perhaps three or four pages covering:

- **The detailed design** guidelines and restrictions that apply to each individual plot.
- **The size of your plot**, the area that can be built upon and possibly the maximum floor area.
- **Maximum heights** for roofs, which tend to be lower when closer to the boundary.
- **How many car spaces** are required and where they can be located on the plot.
- **Conditions** for well-drained drives and other types of hard landscaping.
- **Guidelines** for the design of the main elevation facing the road, to ensure the site looks cohesive.
- **Boundary fencing** type, height and sometimes locations where they are not allowed.
- **Control** of overlooking neighbouring back gardens and balcony design.
- **The nature** and location of service connections.
- **Nature conservation** requirements such as gaps in fences for hedgehogs.
- **The process** for approval of the detailed design, which typically involves a submission with drawings similar to a full planning application.
- **A set time limit** for when the build must be completed after the plot purchase.

height of the house and the relationship between the front elevation and the road. These provisions have a lot in common with the national permitted development rules that allow people to extend their existing house without needing a planning application. The passport may also have more practical information such as the location of the mains service connections and ground conditions. Where the new houses are to be in a terrace, the plot passports are particularly important and have to include a lot of information on how each property will join together successfully and seamlessly with the others.

The benefits for self builders really start to kick in here because they reduce almost all the uncertainties that are presented by a typical single plot. In those cases, either a lot of expensive, time-consuming investigation has to be carried out by the potential purchaser, or a risky acquisition has to be made in the hope that there will be no unexpected problems waiting. If the proposed plan complies with the requirements of the design code and plot passport, final approval of the scheme from the planning department follows quickly – in some cases within four weeks. The general principle is that your design should be approved by default, unless something in either document clearly opposes it.

Getting your design approved

The mechanism used to set up the approval process for custom build sites varies between local authorities. Typically, the council might grant outline permission based on the design code and then grant individual full approvals for each house, use planning conditions, or special legal contracts called Section 106 agreements. These methods give them the power to ensure that the custom build enabler enforces the rules that have been agreed before an application is presented to the council for final approval. There is still a certain amount of experimentation going on to see which methods work best. The big danger is that the planners insist that the code and passports are so lengthy and tightly written that they restrict the freedom of design that is essential for custom build sites to thrive. There is a balance to be struck between controlling house design and allowing sufficient freedom for self builders to do their own thing. In fact, it's not in the interests of local authorities to stifle creativity because the result will be houses that look no different to the generally poorly designed new estates currently being churned out by the big developers.

Above: Unboxed Homes (www.unboxedhomes.com) and architect Poulsom Middlehurst (www.poulsommiddlehurst.com) built a terrace of three houses and four apartments that were sold as customisable shells. Known as the Blenheim Grove project, each homeowner took a different approach to project management

JULIAN OWEN

Julian Owen is an East Midlands-based chartered architect and author of several books on self build and house alterations. His publications include Self Build, Home Extension Design and Kit and Modern Timber Frame Homes. He's also the founder of the ASBA Architects network. To find out more visit www.asba-architects.org.

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How to secure the best self build mortgage

Looking for the right funding to enable your bespoke home building project? Mark Stevenson sets out what you need to know and how to ensure a successful application

So, you've found a plot and can already picture yourself sipping coffee in your designer kitchen – but when you pop into your high street bank to ask about funding, you're met with blank stares and polite rejections. High street banks aren't exactly falling over themselves to offer self build mortgages, but this doesn't have to mean the end of your bespoke home dream. This article explains why big banks aren't quite so friendly, where to look instead, and how you can make yourself look like a five-star borrower to secure funding for your scheme.

What is a self build mortgage?

A self build mortgage is a loan specifically designed to fund the construction of your own home. Unlike traditional products, which provide a lump sum of money to buy a property, this specialist finance releases funds in stages throughout the duration of the building project. For example, you might get a chunk of the mortgage for purchasing the land, another for achieving the weathertight house shell and so on.

The staged release provides the cash flow you need to cover construction costs. It also reassures the lender, as they only need to release smaller amounts of money to pay for work done, rather than risk handing over a large chunk of cash with nothing to show for it.

Why don't high street banks offer self build mortgages?

Most of them simply see self build as a bit risky. When they lend on an existing property, there's a physical asset that they could sell if things go wrong. But with a self build, the asset (your new home) doesn't exist yet. Until the project is completed, they've only got a part-finished house, which – according to their conventional lending models – isn't enough security.

Perhaps more importantly, high street banks don't have the knowledge, resource or experience to oversee these kinds of staged releases. Self builds are complicated and require a lender who understands the regulatory requirements, as well as construction timelines and how projects are professionally built. For big banks, this can be more hassle than it's worth, so they prefer to leave it to specialists who have plenty of experience with construction projects.

This is where building societies step in. Building societies are more flexible and willing to work with self builders because they're more agile and used to funding development projects. They have processes in place to manage any challenges and can ensure that staged payments work for both them and you.

Some of these building societies, however, do prefer that borrowers work with them through experienced brokers. Why? Because brokers familiar with home building know how to deal with self builders and can manage the risks involved. For the lender, this means fewer surprises and less chance of things going wrong.

How to secure the best mortgage offer

So, now you know who will lend to you, how can you be confident of securing the right mortgage? As with any construction project, self building has risks, so lenders will carefully scrutinise applications before they make an offer. If your application isn't A1, you might not get the funds you need for the project. To maximise your chances of getting the highest possible self build mortgage offer, it's vital that you present yourself and your project in the best light. Here's what to do:

1 ASSESS & IMPROVE YOUR CURRENT CREDIT SCORE

Lenders want to see that you're responsible with credit, and a strong score helps prove that. Before applying, check your credit report and make sure everything's in order. Pay down any lingering credit card balances or personal loans, as high debt can make you look financially stretched.

2 MINIMISE ANY UNNECESSARY OUTGOINGS & EXPENSES

Big monthly expenses can reduce your mortgage offer, on the basis of affordability. So, it's worth cutting down wherever possible to demonstrate you can confidently manage the regular repayments.

Cancel underused subscriptions (do you really need five streaming services?) or consider giving these up, at least temporarily. Reduce discretionary spending by cutting back on luxuries that could be seen as non-essential. Dining out every week or splurging on designer clothes might look frivolous to a lender.

Lenders will be concerned about anyone that appears not to have financial control, so if you like a flutter, now's the time to drop the habit. Remember, making small changes in advance of an application can boost your affordability later, so clean up your finances.

3 HAVE PROFESSIONAL PLANS & SPECIFICATIONS

Lenders like to see what they're backing, so make sure your plans and specifications are professional. They'll want to understand the finer detail to be certain that your proposals fit with their lender rules. This isn't just about the building structure or what claddings you'll use; they'll want to assess the value of the finished property, too. It's best to treat this like a pitch – the more you can do to show that your finished home will be professionally built, high quality and valuable, the more confident lenders will feel about financing it.

DON'T FORGET THE PLANNING CONSENT
Lenders won't even look at your application unless it has planning permission – so get this in place before you submit. Head to www.self-build.co.uk/planning-costs to find out how much you should budget for this part of your self build project.

4 HAVE A PROVEN BUILD BUDGET

Since self build mortgages rely on stage releases, the lender wants to know that each drawdown of funds will be enough to keep the project progressing. They'll also want reassurance that you're not going to run out of money part way through the build. It is therefore essential that you put together a detailed budget that proves you understand the various costs involved in your project, leaving nothing to guesswork.

Using the Build It Estimating Service (buildit.co.uk/estimate) is a good first step, as this will enable you to better understand the figures that trades put forward. But your budget should also be backed up with multiple quotes to show your figures are realistic and reliable.

Things don't always go to plan, so the lender will expect to see a contingency of around 10-15% of the construction costs. The contingency must reflect the risks, so to keep this minimal, deal with any problem areas and cut out complexity at the design stage.

5 WORK CLOSELY WITH THE BROKER OR LENDER

Self build mortgages aren't as straightforward as traditional mortgages, so clear communication is essential. You'll need to provide proof of income, your credit history, your build's budget, and any other financial info they request. Present the information as clearly as possible so it can be fully considered by the lender. They will value honesty and prefer borrowers who are upfront about any risks or challenges, so don't hide potential issues.

Getting a self build mortgage may be more work than a standard loan, but with a strong credit score, clear plans, careful budgeting and a little financial tidying, you can position yourself as a strong applicant and secure the funds you need. Remember, the more prepared you are, the easier it will be to show lenders that you're ready to take on a self build and that you're financially equipped to see it through to completion.

MARK STEVENSON

Mark Stevenson has worked as a construction professional for over 35 years and is a serial self builder. He runs project management consultancy Elsworth Projects and, as chair of NaCSBA, advocates for the interests of self builders and contributes to the success of the emerging custom build industry.

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MORTGAGE SERVICES

Your home may be repossessed if you do not keep up repayments on your mortgage.

There may be a fee for mortgage advice. The actual amount you pay will depend on your circumstances. The fee is up to 1% but a typical fee £395.

Self build & custom build mortgage table

Looking to fund your bespoke home project? Each month we round up the best deals from leading lenders and update you on what you need to know to secure the right finance

Advance Stage Payment Mortgages

Created by and exclusive to BuildStore, these mortgages provide guaranteed stage payments based on your costs before each phase of the build. This offers certainty in your budget and peace of mind that you can plan for and pay your bills on time.

Arrears Stage Payment Mortgages

These mortages release funds after each stage of building works is completed. To trigger the payments, a valuation must take place that shows an uplift in value. BuildStore's exclusive mortgages can offer increased borrowing of up to 85% of your costs.

Get In Touch

For advice on funding options for your self or custom build project, speak to the experts at BuildStore by calling **0345 223 4647** or visit **www.buildstore.co.uk**

These products are chosen for illustrative purposes, and were available at the time of going to press.

KEY FOR TABLE: ★ BuildStore Exclusive Product | SB Self Build Mortgage | CB Custom Build Mortgage | LTV Loan to Value

Lender		Mortgage Type	Payment Schedule	Contact	LTV Land	LTV End Value	Interest Rate	1st Stage Payment
Bath BS	★	SB & CB	Advance	0345 223 4647	95%	85%	6.94%	DPP & Building Regs
Buckinghamshire BS	★	SB & CB	Advance	0345 223 4647	80%	80%	6.49%	DPP & Building Regs
Darlington BS	★	SB & CB	Advance	0345 223 4647	85%	80%	6.49%	DPP & Building Regs
Furness BS	★	SB & CB	Advance	0345 223 4647	80%	80%	6.24%	DPP & Building Regs
Furness BS (Green Build)	★	SB & CB	Advance	0345 223 4647	80%	80%	6.49%	DPP & Building Regs
Hinckley & Rugby BS	★	SB & CB	Advance	0345 223 4647	90%	80%	7.14%	DPP & Building Regs
Mansfield BS	★	SB & CB	Advance	0345 223 4647	85%	80%	6.40%	DPP & Building Regs
Newcastle BS	★	SB & CB	Advance	0345 223 4647	90%	90%	6.80%	DPP & Building Regs
Tipton & Coseley	★	SB & CB	Advance	0345 223 4647	85%	75%	6.19%	DPP & Building Regs
Vernon BS	★	SB & CB	Advance	0345 223 4647	85%	80%	7.05%	DPP & Building Regs
Bath BS	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	95%	85%	6.64%	Foundations
Buckinghamshire BS	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	80%	80%	6.35%	Foundations
Chorley BS	★	SB &CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	50%	70%	6.10%	Foundations
Darlington BS	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	70%	70%	5.74%	Foundations
Furness BS	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	70%	70%	5.74%	Foundations
Furness BS (Green Build)	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	80%	80%	6.20%	Foundations
Hinckley & Rugby BS	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	90%	80%	7.14%	Foundations
Mansfield BS	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	80%	80%	6.04%	Foundations
Newcastle BS	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	90%	90%	6.60%	Foundations
Stafford Railway BS	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	85%	75%	6.40%	Foundations
Tipton & Coseley BS	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	75%	75%	5.79%	Foundations
Vernon BS	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	85%	80%	6.89%	Foundations
Beverley BS		SB	Arrears	01482 881 510	50%	80%	6.44%	Wall Plate
Earl Shilton BS		SB	Arrears	01455 844 422	75%	75%	6.69%	Flexible
Hanley BS		SB	Arrears	01782 255000	60%	60%	5.99%	Foundations
Melton Mowbray BS		SB	Arrears	01664 414 141	n/a	75%	6.09%	Foundations
Saffron BS		SB & CB	Arrears	0333 015 2970	75%	75%	6.44%	Flexible
Suffolk BS		SB	Arrears	0330 123 0723	80%	80%	5.84%	Foundations

ECO ENERGY

SOLAR PV IS IT RIGHT FOR ME?

Above: Fitted on the roof of a contemporary new home, this solar array was manufactured by Solarwatt (solarwatt.com). Eco Energy Environment (eeelimited.com) both supplied and installed the setup

Eco expert Nigel Griffiths explains how this renewable tech works and takes a closer look at the costs involved

Solar photovoltaic (PV) panels have become something of a panacea in sustainable building. Keen to generate your own power? Go solar. Want to be off grid? Go solar (and move south). Want to say your building is net energy positive? Add way more PV. But there's no such thing as a free lunch. There are several questions around PV that need addressing before reaching the conclusion, as so many have, that PV is simply the best way to generate energy and there are no downsides to the equation. Here, I explain the basics of how solar panels work before taking a deep dive into costs, payback periods and what can affect the amount of time it takes for your investment to pay off.

The essentials

Photovoltaic generation (PV) takes energy from light (photons) and transforms it into electricity (volts). Photovoltaic cells produce very small amounts of power, so they're grouped into modules. A panel consists of several modules linked together. Where multiple units are grouped together this is known as an array.

The power generated by PV cells is direct current at low voltage. Unless the power is being used solely to run low-voltage, direct current (d/c) appliances, it needs to be converted to 240V alternating current (a/c) – ie normal domestic electricity – by means of an inverter. A cable connects the panels to the inverter and the system is then linked to the mains. Any electricity which isn't immediately used on site can either be stored or exported to the grid.

To maximise yield, panels should be orientated to face south, though a useful lower yield will still be achieved from panels facing southwest to southeast. At east or west orientation the yield starts to fall significantly. At our latitude in the UK, the angle for collectors to be installed to maximise yield is 35° from the horizontal. Fortunately, this is consistent with the most common roof types in this country, so if you have a south-facing pitched roof you can most likely get close to the maximum yield simply by fitting panels on the existing structure.

Of course, you need to avoid overshading, as trees or nearby buildings on the southern aspect of the installation will sharply reduce output. PV can also be fitted on flat roofs by using suitably angled mounting brackets. In independent installations, yield can be increased by using a solar tracker which turns the panels to follow the sun, so the array is always angled towards it.

Costs

PV systems are measured in terms of kWp – kilowatts peak. This is the amount of energy that a system can generate when operating at full power, ie in the middle of that sunny day we had back in June. Costs are normally expressed in £/kWp. So, if a typical domestic system was

4kWp and cost £6,000, we'd say the cost is £1,500 per kWp. This includes not just the collectors, but the inverter, controls, wiring and installation, too.

Surprisingly, it's quite difficult to nail down average costs. They seem to have risen in recent years before falling back a little recently – but data is sparse. Plenty of websites claim that a 4kWp system costs between £5,000 and £6,000, but the database of approved installers under the Microgeneration Certification Scheme (MCS) suggests the current cost is over £2,000 per kWp. In theory, it should cost less to install if you're building a new house than if you're retrofitting the panels on an existing one, as scaffolding is already in place and you have ready access to wiring routes etc. Built-in PV (BIPV), where the collectors form part of the roof covering, should offer a small saving in deducted roof finish materials to offset the capital cost of the system.

It's also worth bearing in mind that the inverter is expected to need replacing at least once during the system's lifetime. Again, data is sparse but it's wise to factor in this additional cost from the outset.

Financial payback

The amount of time it takes for an investment in PV to pay back through reductions in energy bills is known as the payback period. Of course, there's a difference between cash spent now and money saved in the future – you'd rather have £1 now than £1 in 10 years' time, because that money will go further today. Future savings should therefore be discounted to arrive at the present value to compare them with capital cost. Using the Treasury's current Green Book rate of 3.5%, £1 in a decade's time should be treated as the equivalent of 70p now. So, the value of future payments will gradually diminish over time. After 20 years, the value is less than half. However, electricity prices are expected to rise gradually, so this might well offset the interest rate.

As such, payback times are normally expressed in terms of simple payback – cost divided by savings based on the current price of electricity. This sum is dependent on:

- How much energy your panels produce (kWh) for each kWp of capacity (assuming the array is positioned at the optimal angle and orientation).
- How much of your self-generated electricity you use at home, displacing grid consumption, and how much is exported to the grid.
- The amount that your energy supplier pays for exported electricity.
- Whether or not you have battery storage.

If you're out most of the day and don't have battery storage, the bulk of the energy produced is exported to the grid. It's not straightforward to say how much you'll be paid for this, as the Smart Export Guarantee scheme only stipulates the rate should be above zero. To get the best tariffs there are many conditions attached, and rates can vary according to time of day. Generally, the export rate is much lower than what you pay to buy your electricity in.

So, in the example (right), with no allowance for the cost of inverter replacement, the payback period would be about 15 years. After that, you start to see a net return against your initial outlay. This can be compared to the average life of a PV system, commonly quoted as 25 years. Therefore, you can expect the system to pay back within its lifetime. Factor in inverter replacement and the payback would be only just within the expected lifetime.

Left: Solex's (solexenergy.co.uk) solar roof tiles function as electricity generators, as well as providing a roof covering that blends seamlessly with the design of the house. The tiles can be fitted to cover the whole roof covering from edge to edge, all the way from the eaves to the ridge and out to the verge and hips/valleys. They also interlock seamlessly with natural slate roof tiles if you only want to install solar panels on one section of the roof

Panel efficiency & degradation

The power output generated by any solar array falls slightly each year, but this drop is thought to be less than 1% per annum. The rate of degradation may differ between manufacturers, so it's essential to check independently verified data on long term performance before deciding which solution best suits your home. At 0.8% per annum, the fall in output would only be 18% by year 25, but this still has a modest impact on the payback equation.

Impact of battery storage

Adding battery storage will increase the percentage of energy used at home rather than exported to the grid, but it will substantially increase your initial costs, so won't

EXAMPLE PAYBACK PERIOD

Size of system	4kWp
Cost of system	£7,000
Output per kWp	800kWh/kWp
Total annual generation	3,200kWh
Cost of electricity displaced	20p/kWh
Percentage used on site	50%
Annual saving (3,200 kWh x £0.2 x 0.5)	£320 pa
Percentage exported	50%
Export payment	10p/kWh
Annual value of exports	£160 pa
Total saving	£480 pa
Payback period (£7,000 / £480)	15 years

Above & inset: This sympathetic one-and-a-half-storey SIPs self build by SIPS@Clays (clays.com) features a range of renewable systems to achieve net zero carbon, including a 6.4kW solar PV array, 3kW wind turbine and an MVHR system

reduce your payback period. Instead, you can improve the equation by doing energy-intensive things, such as washing clothes, during the daytime when your solar panels are generating power.

Battery storage can, however, be used to buy and store grid electricity at night, which is cheaper. This can then be used during peak hours instead of importing electricity at full rate. This is a game-changer in terms of the economics of battery storage, but in and of itself doesn't mean that PV is any more sustainable.

Embodied energy

One of the main goals of installing PV generation is to reduce carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions. If we are trying to get emissions down quickly, say by 2035, then this factor becomes critically important. The biggest question is whether the panels will save more emissions than are created during the manufacture, transport, installation and recycling of solar PV systems; what we call 'embodied' CO2.

Above: Bifacial solar PV panels form the roof of this property's carport in Wiltshire. Pure Energy UK (pureenergyuk.com) also installed battery storage and an EV charger as part of the setup

There doesn't seem to be agreement on the embodied energy of producing PV panels, though the figure of 400-800kg of CO2 per kWp output is often quoted. Yet, it's unclear whether this includes all components of the system and whether all aspects of the life cycle are factored into the equation. If we assume that 800kg/kWp does take everything into account, then the time it would take for a PV system to pay back the investment in CO2 would be about five years, based on a UK electricity grid intensity of 0.2kg/kWh. If the grid intensity falls further, as planned and expected to happen, then the carbon payback period will lengthen correspondingly.

Another source (circularecology.com) quotes a figure of 2,560kg/kWp, which implies a very high investment in CO2 now, which will only just pay back within the lifetime of the PV system. The majority of panel setups installed in the UK are manufactured in China, which has a much higher carbon electricity supply – 0.582kg/kWh compared to our 0.2kg/kWh. In other words, we're using high carbon electricity to manufacture equipment to displace lower carbon electricity consumption. This might account for the long carbon payback of solar PV.

Recycling PV panels has moved on in recent years. We now have a UK recycling facility and this is set to get bigger as installs start to come to the end of their life. Components are broken down into their constituent parts and most of the material is then reused. There is a significant energy component to this process and for thin film application there are concerns about the use of cadmium, but it's possible for polycrystalline panels (the majority of systems) to be recycled safely.

NIGEL GRIFFITHS

Nigel Griffiths specialises in sustainable construction and eco-renovation and is the author of the Haynes Eco House Manual. He advises UK government on retrofit programmes and inspects renewable heat installations on behalf of Ofgem. You can chat to Nigel at the Build It Live shows.

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Ask the EXPERTS

Essential advice on your problems with building, budgeting, DIY & planning from the most experienced names in the self build industry

PLANNING
Martin Gaine runs planning consultancy Just Planning (www.just-planning.co.uk). A former case officer, he has experience on both sides of the planning divide and now specialises in helping homeowners win consent at appeal. He is the author of How to Get Planning Permission: An Insider's Secrets.

FINANCE
Rachel Pyne is director of financial services at BuildStore (www.buildstore.co.uk). She has worked in self build finance for over 10 years and deals with a diverse portfolio of lenders across the whole market, as well as on exclusive self build and renovation mortgage products.

SUSTAINABILITY
Nigel Griffiths specialises in sustainable construction and eco-renovation and was the author of the Haynes Eco House Manual. He advises UK government on retrofit programmes and inspects renewable heat installations on behalf of Ofgem. You can chat to Nigel at the Build It Live shows.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT
Mark Stevenson has worked as a construction professional for over 35 years and is a serial self builder. He runs project management consultancy Elsworth Projects and, as chair of NaCSBA, advocates for the interests of self builders and contributes to the success of the emerging custom build industry.

PERIOD PROPERTIES
Alan Tierney is a period property and conservation specialist. He ran an historic building consultancy, offering hands-on advice to heritage homeowners, but is now focused on renovating yet another property: Old Barnstaple House.

DESIGN
Opinder Liddar is a director at Lapd Architects (www.lapdarchitects.co.uk). The practice specialises in residential projects from extensions to new builds, making him the ideal person to answer all your home design questions.

VAT RECLAIMS
Kathy Tisdale runs Self Build VAT Reclaims (www.selfbuildvatreclaims.com), providing a professional VAT reclaim service which enables self builders and converters to focus on their project.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Is the depth of my trench fill foundation viable?

I'm building a three-bed detached home in the back garden of a commercial property that I own. A structural engineer specified a 600mm x 900mm trench foundation at the front and back wall, and 900mm x 900mm for a longer side wall. All was going smoothly with the project – the foundation was excavated as per the design, ready to be checked by the building inspector. The building inspector raised some concerns regarding heave protection in the design. This is possibly because, prior to the excavation, we removed a small maple tree of around five-metres tall that was next to the foundation area. We forwarded his queries on to the structural engineer and he changed the depth from 900mm to 2250mm from all the walls. This isn't ideal, so I am wondering if it is actually economical to specify this updated depth for a trench fill foundation?

It's not uncommon to see issues like this crop up in building projects. You'd think hiring a structural engineer would mean a thorough site investigation to inform the foundation design, but sometimes this doesn't happen. In this case, the presence of a tree – even if recently removed – can affect the foundation, especially in areas with clay soils prone to swelling and heave. Trees can impact ground stability, often requiring deeper foundations.

It sounds like the building control inspector is doing their job by questioning the foundation design. However, it's concerning that the structural engineer wasn't confident enough in their design to stand by it, which could be a red flag. For peace of mind, it might be a good time to bring in a second structural engineer to review the design. After all, the goal is a foundation that's reliable and won't develop costly defects – even if that means shelling out a bit more now by way of design fees.

Without seeing the site and understanding the conditions firsthand, it's hard to say if there's a more cost-effective solution. Foundation options like piling might reduce costs, but could be impractical due to access or the potential impact on neighbouring properties. Another option might be a ground-bearing slab, but to be honest, in cases like these, simply adding extra depth to the foundation in localised areas is often the most economical option.

ISTOCK.COM/SONSAM

Trench fill is one of the most common foundation types for self build projects. This consists of trenches 1m-2m deep, which are mass filled with concrete. Blockwork is built up from just below ground level to DPC – it's a quick solution and saves on labour

PLANNING

How much should planning permission cost for a small home?

I'm looking to buy a plot that was previously agricultural land. It needs to be cleared of trees, but I'm hoping to build either a small mobile home or a timber frame property. How much can I expect to pay for the relevant planning permission?

The cost of making a planning permission application for a new home has soared in recent years, mainly as councils demand more specialist reports.

The most obvious cost of an application is the planning application fee to the council, which is currently £648, including the administration fee charged by the Planning Portal (www.planningportal.co.uk).

The most costly single item is likely to be the services of a good architect or designer. It is possible to commission basic plans for a few thousand pounds, but higher quality drawings are much more likely to provide a successful outcome – both in terms of your chances of getting consent and in terms of the quality of the final property that you build.

Since you're proposing a simple mobile home or prefabricated timber building, it may be that you can obtain a set of plans from the manufacturer and can save money here. However, you will still need a location plan and a block plan showing where on the site the structure will be sited, how it will be accessed, what parking is to be provided and how the plot will be landscaped.

Then come the specialist reports, which typically cost around £1,000 to £2,000 each. Since April 2024, applications for a new dwelling require a biodiversity net gain (BNG) assessment, though self builders are exempt. If your land might have protected species, you will need to submit a Preliminary Ecological Assessment. If there are potential highway issues (around the access to the site or parking provision), you may need a Highways Assessment. If any trees remain on site or your proposal might affect trees on a neighbouring plot, you will need a tree survey. The council may ask for an energy statement (in relation to carbon emissions), a heritage statement (if you're close to a listed building), or a flood risk assessment (if your site is in a flood zone). Additionally, if you're concerned that your proposal is controversial from a planning point of view, it's a good idea to get a planning consultant to prepare a planning statement.

How do you work out which, if any, of these reports will be needed? You can seek pre-application advice from the council or from a planning consultant. Alternatively, check out the council's validation checklist, which details its requirements for different types of planning applications. Also, take a look at other applications for similar proposals in your local area to see what they submitted and what was approved. My advice is, if in doubt, do the report anyway, it saves time later!

ISTOCK.COM/GWYCECH

DESIGN

How do I ensure my wall is entirely dry after a damp issue?

Due to an incorrectly installed rooflight on my extension, I've had water ingress into a cavity wall. The window itself is now fixed, but I'm unsure on how to deal with the damage. What's the best way to ensure that the two leaves of the wall are totally dry as well as my insulation? The plasterboard is stained and so I assume will have to be replaced. What are my options?

It's a shame that this has caused so much disruption; unfortunately it happens too often due to poor installation, or the roof being too low pitch for the rooflight that has been fitted.

In terms of the water damage, this usually requires a fair amount of time to dry out. When homes are flooded, often the plaster is removed to allow the walls to dry out and this would appear to be a similar situation – albeit you will have damage at the top of the roof potentially running down through the whole wall. Depending on how long the leak has been there and how extensive the water ingress has been, this may be a course of action that you have to take.

I would start with a damp meter and probe the plaster to see if this is showing excessive moisture. The only way to penetrate the layers behind will be to remove sections of plaster to access the block or brick wall structure. If you do locate excessive moisture, then I would suggest removing the entirety of the plaster in each of the damp areas.

Externally, the wall will dry out eventually and that leaves the insulation. It is possible to drill a hole into the cavity and use an endoscopic camera to see if this area is also damp. If you think it is, you may need to produce a more sizable hole using a core drill to pull some of the upper section of insulation out and assess how damp this is. If it is a PIR type insulation, then this will also eventually dry out, but if it is a mineral wool type, its effectiveness will be hampered by the damp and it will be more difficult to remove. It may well be that you will need to leave the plaster off for some time to enable this layer to dry out, as it would be very difficult to try and replace this.

ANY QUESTIONS? Send all your self build, renovation and conversion questions to buildit@castlemedia.co.uk or visit www.self-build.co.uk/question
Please note all correspondence may be published in the magazine

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FIND YOUR DREAM BUILDING PLOT

PlotBrowser.com is a 100% free-to-use plot and property finder, packed with 1,000s of home building opportunities. Here's a taster of the fantastic self build plots, renovation properties and conversions currently for sale near you

PlotBrowser.com is the latest addition to Build It's series of powerful project tools (**www.buildit.co.uk/tools**) designed to put you on the path to self build success.

Updated daily, this is your dedicated resource for finding genuine self build land and renovation opportunities. You'll find 1,000s of plots and properties to view nationwide, and each listing features the site details, photos, guide price and sellers' contact information – including details such as whether the plot or property is being sold at auction and, if so, when.

Crucially, we've done a big part of the plot-hunting job for you: all our plots already have either outline or full planning permission in place, so you won't have to waste your time looking at duds that might never gain consent to build.

What's more, we've sourced the planning reference for you, so that you can quickly and easily identify the current planning consent on the relevant local authority's website. This will arm you with a full understanding of the site's planning history and what's been permitted, so you can gauge whether the plot can support the kind of house you'd like to create.

The following pages are a sample of the plots, renovations and conversion projects available on **PlotBrowser.com** this month.

GOT A PLOT TO SELL?
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PlotBrowser from **Build It** magazine

START YOUR PLOT SEARCH

To find more plots with planning permission across the UK, and get free notifications of new opportunities based on your personal criteria, sign up today at **www.PlotBrowser.com**

TYPES OF BUILDING PLOT

New homes can be built on a range of sites and knowing about the opportunities can help you spot land with potential. Here are the key options:

BROWNFIELD SITES

This refers to previously developed land that is or was once occupied by a permanent structure. Government policy supports the provision of new housing in such locations and, on a practical level, services are likely to be in place.

DEMOLISH & REPLACE

A type of brownfield opportunity where you could knock down a building, such as an old bungalow, and construct a new home in its place. It's often more cost-effective than a renovation as VAT can be reclaimed on a new build project.

EDGE-OF-SETTLEMENT

Depending on the maps in the relevant council's Local Plan, this kind of site may or may not fall within existing built-up area boundaries. Generally, policies allow development within this zone, but control it very strictly outside. Any undeveloped land, known as greenfield, will typically only support housing to serve the needs of agriculture, replacement dwellings and some infill.

INFILL PLOTS

Many councils define this as a small gap between an otherwise built-up frontage or group of houses. Infilling is usually allowed within settlements' development boundaries, and sometimes outside of these. Gaining consent will be more difficult in zones such as conservation areas.

GARDENS

Contrary to the 'backland development' headlines of a few years ago, planners still allow schemes on garden plots, especially in places that are considered to be built-up. You may even be lucky enough to have a large space that could work as a viable site or know someone who is willing to negotiate a fair price.

SERVICED PLOTS

Land that's ready to build on, with utilities, highway access and potentially other infrastructure already in place, as well as at least outline planning consent. This route offers more certainty over early-stage costs.

ENGLAND

BEDFORDSHIRE

BEDFORD

Pemberley Avenue

Old school premises with a pending planning permission application for its conversion into a three-storey five-bedroom family home.
Guide price: £700,000
Planning: Bedford Borough Council Refer to Agent
Contact: Lane & Holmes 01234 327744 sales@hea.co.uk

BERKSHIRE

SLOUGH

Elmwood Road

Triangular site with planning consent for a two-bedroom, detached two-storey house extending to 72m. The site extends $203m^2$.
Guide price: £125,000
Planning: Cornwall Council PA23/03780
Contact: Connells 01908 674141 miltonkeynes@connells.co.uk

NEWBURY

Land for sale

Single building plot with full planning permission in place for a detached four-bedroom house.
Guide price: £450,000
Planning: West Berkshire Council 24/00674/FUL
Contact: Chancellors 01635 46666 newbury.sales@chancellors.co.uk

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

LUDGERSHALL

Wotton End

An old stable block with class Q planning consent for a one-bedroom detached house on a 1.14-acre plot
Guide price: £200,000
Planning: Aylesbury Vale District Council 23/00080/REF
Contact: W Humphries Ltd 01296 658270 bill@whumphries.co.uk

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

CHEARSLEY

Land for sale

A plot with detailed consent for the demolition of a bungalow and the erection of a modern detached home with parking and gardens.
Guide price: £450,000
Planning: Aylesbury Vale District Council P24/00959/APP
Contact: Fisher German 01844 212004 thameagency@fishergerman.co.uk

CAMBRIDGESHIRE

ELY

Victoria Street

Plot with full planning permission for a two-bedroom dwelling with parking.
Guide price: £145,000
Planning: East Cambridgeshire District Council 21/01441/FUL
Contact: Cheffins 01223 214214 cambridge.residential@cheffins.co.uk

GUILDEN MORDEN

Pound Green

Detached, timbe- framed barn with planning permission approved for its conversion into a four-bedroom home. The plot is approx 0.18 acres.
Guide price: £290,000
Planning: South Cambridgeshire District Council 20/03801/CONDB & 20/03801/CONDA
Contact: Country Properties 01525 403033 ampthill@country-properties.co.uk

NEWMARKET

Burrough Green

Residential site with planning permission for the erection of two new detached dwellings. Mains services are connected including water and electricity.
Guide price: £475,000
Planning: East Cambridgeshire District Council 23/00443/FUL
Contact: Shires Residential 01284 760770 bury@shiresresidential.com

CHESHIRE

ASTBURY LAKE

Newcastle Road

Outline planning consent is granted for the redevelopment of the existing restaurant for residential purposes, with additional land retained for a biodiversity habitat area.
Guide price: £600,000
Planning: Cheshire East Council 22/0621C
Contact: Reeds Rains 01260 275217 congleton@reedsrains.co.uk

SOUTH VIEW

Alpraham

Three plots available, each with planning permission granted for a detached four-bedroom home of around $2,228ft^2$ with an integral garage. Price per plot.
Guide price: £435,000
Planning: Cheshire East Council 22/0524N
Contact: Gascoigne Halman 01829 707885 tarporley@gascoignehalman.co.uk

CORNWALL

CALLINGTON

House with land for sale

Development opportunity with planning permission to convert a traditional barn into a two-bedroom home. The property is situated within a secluded 0.35 acre plot overlooking open fields and countryside.
Guide price: £175,000
Planning: Cornwall Council PA23/08526
Contact: eXp UK - South West 020 3641 1316 adam.day@exp.uk.com

CAMBORNE

Barripper

Outline planning permission has been granted for a two-bedroom detached dwelling. Currently there is a single garage on site which could be used within the new development.
Guide price: £120,000
Planning: Cornwall Council PA24/02938
Contact: MAP Estate Agents 01209 243333 sales@mapestateagents.com

FOWEY

Bodinnick

An opportunity to create a modern detached family home in an elevated position, offering fantastic views. The property also enjoys a mooring on Bodinnick foreshore for a Rowing boat or Dinghy.
Guide price: £1,295,000
Planning: Cornwall Council PA23/03780

Contact: The Property Shop 01208 872728 lostwithielproperty @thepropertyshopcornwall.co.uk

PENRITH
St. Gluvias
Plans approved for a two-bedroom stable conversion with mains electric and new borehole for water on site.
Guide price: £300,000
Planning: Cornwall Council PA22/03523
Contact: Lodge & Thomas - Truro 01872 395948 property@lodgeandthomas.co.uk

POLGOOTH
Pentewan Valley
An individual building plot extending to over 2.6 acres with permission for a large, detached dwelling of over 3,600ft^{2}. Wonderful riverside location and with further land available.
Guide price: £350,000
Planning: Cornwall Council PA24/01385
Contact: Lodge & Thomas Chartered Surveyors 01872 272722 property@lodgeandthomas.co.uk

COUNTY DURHAM

MORDUE TERRACE
Annfield Plain
Planning permission has been granted for demolition of the existing garages and creation of three new terraced houses with off-street parking to the rear and a private garden to the front. The site extends to approx 0.09 acres.
Guide price: £60,000
Planning: Durham County Council DM/21/03249/FPA
Contact: Galbraith 01434 693693 hexham@galbraithgroup.com

CUMBRIA

CARLISLE
Little Orton
Full planning permission has been granted for a four-bedroom detached family home with garden.
Guide price: £175,000
Planning: Carlisle City Council 23/0143
Contact: P F K - Land Agency 01768 866611 carlisle@pfk.co.uk

MILLOM
Bay View Close
Planning permission is granted for a four-bedroom detached family home.
Guide price: £65,000
Planning: Copeland Borough Council Refer to Agent
Contact: Corrie and Co Ltd 01229 355333 info@corrieandco.co.uk

SHAP ABBEY
The Abbey Custodian Cottage
Stunning riverside plot of 950m^{2} with existing dwelling for either renovation with the current permission or a possible replacement.
Guide price: £235,000
Planning: Eden District Council 2024/1308/FPA
Contact: Private seller sfox285@yahoo.co.uk

DERBYSHIRE

PENTRICH
Main Road
Planning permission granted for a circa 4,000ft^{2} family home, with a westerly aspect and some incredible countryside views.
Guide price: £400,000
Planning: Amber Valley Borough Council AVA-2022-1101
Contact: The Avenue UK 0121 721 3104 home@theavenue.co.uk

DRONFIELD
Fletcher Avenue
An opportunity to acquire an affordable building plot which has planning permission granted for a detached two-storey dwelling.
Guide price: £70,000
Planning: North East Derbyshire District Council 23/00433/FL
Contact: Saxton Mee 01246 290992 dronfield@saxtonmee.co.uk

NETHER HEAGE
Ridgeway Lane
Plot of around 1,453ft^{2} with full detailed planning permission granted for a pair of three-bedroom detached dwellings.
Guide price: £370,000
Planning: Amber Valley Borough Council AVA/2024/0196
Contact: Cope & Co 01332 300100 derby@copeandco.co.uk

DEVON

BIGBURY ON SEA
Warren Road
Rare opportunity to acquire an uninterrupted coastal sea view building plot in a stunning location without any occupancy restrictions. Full planning permission for the construction of a contemporary detached four-bedroom house set in an elevated position above the beach.
Guide price: £1,250,000
Planning: South Hams District Council 2803/22/VAR
Contact: Purple Bricks 0800 810 8008 info@purplebricks.com

CULLOMPTON
Uffculme
Detached barn with detailed planning permission granted for its conversion and extension to form a two- to three-bedroom dwelling.
Guide price: £350,000
Planning: Mid Devon District Council 23/01758/ful
Planning: Kitchener Land and Planning 01392 879300 alex@klp.land

HEMYOCK
Clayhidon
Barn with full planning consent for conversion into a single residential dwelling.
Guide price: £50,000
Planning: Mid Devon District Council 22/00644/ful
Planning: Symonds & Sampson 01460 200790 ilminster@ symondsandsampson.co.uk

OKEHAMPTON
Petrockstowe
A 0.7-acre plot has approval for a four-bedroom bungalow of almost 2,200ft^{2} with great views.
Guide price: £100,000
Planning: Torridge District Council 1/0946/2020/OUT & 1/1161/2022/REM
Contact: Miller Town & Country 01837 54080 okehampton@millertc.co.uk

CORNWALL

ALTARNUN
Land for sale in Trewint
A large plot with planning consent for the construction of a three-bedroom detached dwelling and integrated garage.
Guide price: £150,000
Planning: Cornwall Council PA23/05409
Contact: Stratton Creber 01208 74422 bodmin@strattoncreber.co.uk

WHAT MAKES A GOOD PLOT?

The perfect piece of land would be in a pleasant area, affordable and level, with easy access, good ground conditions and no planning issues or obstructions. The issue, of course, is that plot may not exist. Even the best sites require some compromise, so it's crucial to properly assess contenders to get as close as possible to your goals.

All the plots in our listings come with planning permission: either outline (a loose affirmation the site can be developed) or full (consent for a particular design). Beware of any site without current approval. Land is worth considerably more once consent has been granted, so if the deal looks too good to be true, it probably is.

Once you've spotted an opportunity, consider whether the type of house you want can be comfortably accommodated on the plot, and if the existing consent allows for it or could be amended to suit. If it's a yes to both, then the site is worth a bit more research.

Check for issues on the plot that could increase construction costs, make it difficult to get the right design for your needs, or affect the viability of a project. Some of the most notorious budget-busters include steep slopes, difficult access to services, or obstacles like overhead cables. Most issues are not insurmountable and, with good design, some can even be turned to your advantage.

From a planning perspective, check how long is left on the consent. If it is less than six months and you will need to redesign the house to suit your needs or sort out any planning conditions, this could be problematic.

If early investigations seem positive, then you can move on to a more in-depth appraisal of how suitable the site is. Consider access, ground conditions, drainage and legal matters. If you are unsure, seek professional advice. This might mean speaking to your local council. Our useful online resource **www.self-build.co.uk/plot-checklist** can help bring structure to this part of the assessment process.

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PlotBrowser
from **BuildIt** magazine

SMALLHOLDING IN THE WELSH VALLEYS

LOCATION Llanafan, Aberystwyth, Ceredigion

GUIDE PRICE £675,000

AREA 17.7 acres

PLANNING Ceredigion County Council A230814 & A211090

CONTACT Morgan & Davies
01545 571600
aberaeron@morgananddavies.co.uk

Set in 17.7 acres with outstanding views over the Ystwyth valley, this smallholding comprises a fully refurbished four-bedroom farmhouse and a range of traditional stone and slate outbuildings for conversion.

This traditional property is part of a historic local holding and, as such, has retained a wealth of original character features planning permission has been granted for proposed alterations and extensions to the farmhouse, including the change of use of part of the adjoining outbuilding into residential use. Currently this is partly clad and finished in lime wash render under a traditional Welsh slate roof. Other outbuildings include a store room, former cow shed, side muck store and an animal housing unit.

The land is split into three large enclosures with a productive 7.6-acre parcel to the front of the property accessed from an adjoining private lane. Two sloping enclosures, measuring 2.22 acres and 6.05 acres, provide excellent grazing land. There is an option to buy an additional 48 acres of grazing and cropping land to the north of the holding.

The site is situated within the popular rural village of Llanafan. Amenities such as a school, shop and post office can be found at the nearby Llanilar, while Aberystwyth is just a 15 minute drive from the property. Here there is a hospital, university, library, Welsh Government and council offices, shops, supermarkets, cafes, bars, restaurants, leisure centres and access to the famous promenade.

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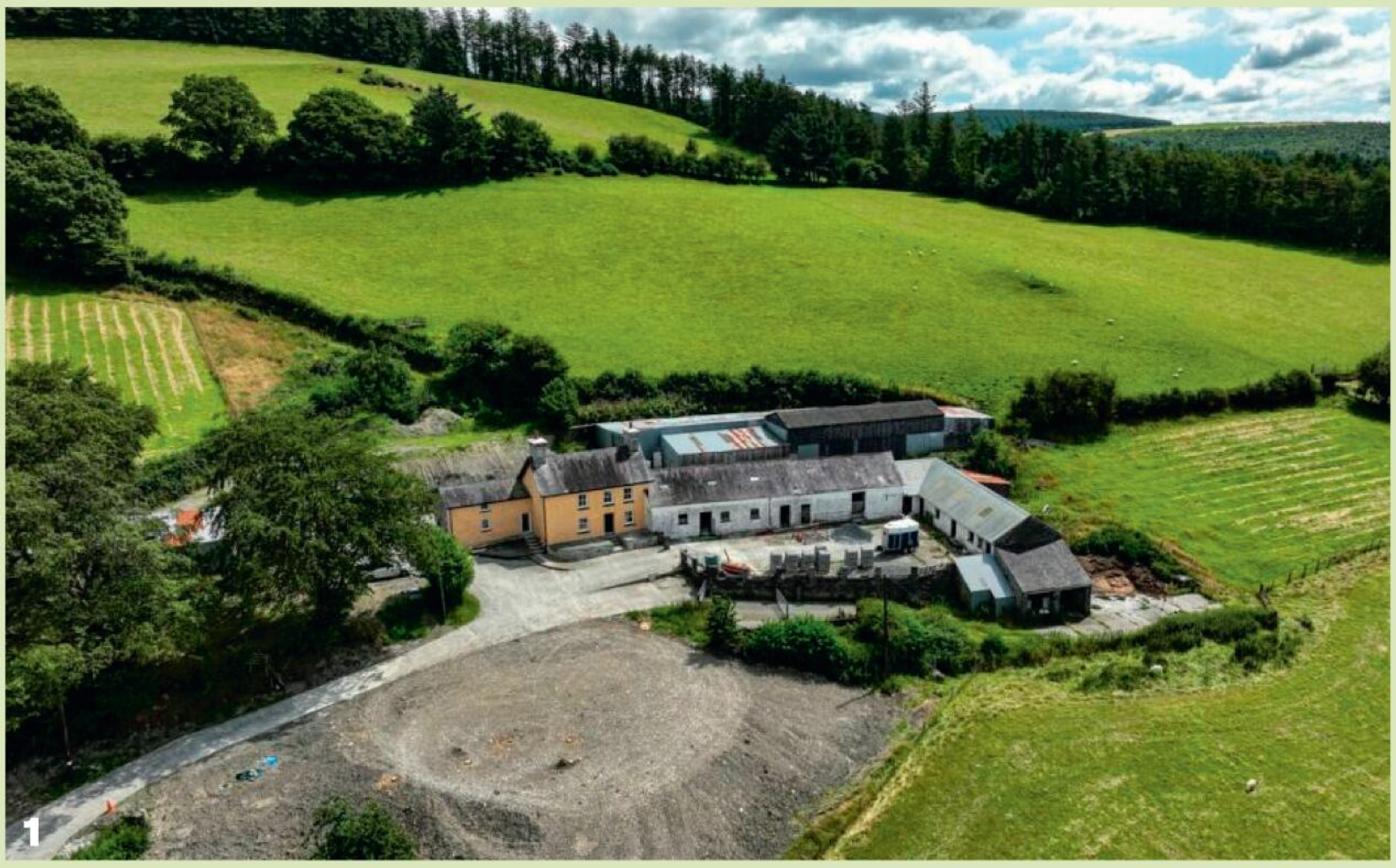

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1 The smallholding enjoys lovely views over the Ystwyth valley

2 The large site is split into three large enclosures

3 The adjoining building is finished with a traditional Welsh slate roof

4 One of many outbuildings on site

5 The fully-refurbished farmhouse

6 Consent is granted for change of use into a residential dwelling

PLYMOUTH

Arcadia Road

Plot with full detailed planning granted for the erection of five detached residential dwellings.

Guide price: £550,000

Planning: Plymouth City Council 24/00372/FUL

Contact: Lang Town & Country 01752 256000 property@langtownandcountry.com

PYWORTHY

Derril, Plot B

An opportunity to acquire a 0.25-acre plot with full planning permission for a five-bedroom house, in a quiet hamlet. Plot B has open fields to the front. It is flat and has been levelled ready for building. Externally there are gardens, parking for six or seven cars and an attached double garage.

Guide price: £180,000

Planning: West Devon Borough Council 1277/20/0865/23/ARC & 2521/23/ARC

Contact: View Property 01822 614614 tavy@viewproperty.org.uk

SAMPFORD

Cricket Grange

Plot with full planning permission for a new two-storey dwelling and detached garage/carport.

Guide price: £365,000

Planning: West Devon Borough Council 3484/23/FUL

Contact: Emoov 0345 561 0050 info@emoov.co.uk

TORQUAY

Thatcher Avenue

Plot with planning consent for a five-bedroom house overlooking the sea.

Guide price: £1,345,000

Planning: Torbay Council P/2022/1375

Contact: John Couch 01803 296500 mail@johncouch.co.uk

DORSET

BOURNEMOUTH

Glenferness Avenue

Two garden plots with planning permission granted for the construction of a pair of detached four-bedroom houses with parking spaces and gardens.

Guide price: £700,000

Planning: Bournemouth Borough Council 7-2023-10967-W

Contact: Tony Newman Estate Agents 01202 660312 info@tonynewmanestateagents.co.uk

CORFE MULLEN

Land for sale

Serviced 16m x 31m plot with detailed consent for a five-bedroom bungalow, garage and ample off-street parking.

Guide price: £500,000

Planning: Dorset Council P/FUL/2023/04060

Contact: Private seller 07596 870008 cpayne@ferventgroup.co.uk

DORCHESTER

Plots for sale

Two plots, each with outline planning for a four-bedroom detached home of circa 2,100ft^2. Set in a secluded position on the edge of the village.

Guide price: £500,000

Planning: Dorset Council P/OUT/2022/03731

Contact: Private seller michele749@hotmail.com

EAST SUSSEX

BATTLE

Hemingfold Farmhouse, Hastings Road

Barn with full planning permission for a 2,000ft^2 property, which could easily be changed into two dwellings. There is also a one-and-a-half-acre paddock with full planning consent, and a further 13 acres which could be built on subject to permissions.

Guide price: £250,000

Planning: Rother District Council RR/2023/2398/P

Contact: Private seller 01424 774871 bigmonkton@hotmail.com

BEXHILL-ON-SEA

Barnhorn Road

A large building plot with outline planning permission for a four-bedroom detached house.

Guide price: £225,000

Planning: Rother District Council RR/2024/284/P

Contact: PCM Estate Agents 01424 839111 info@pcmestateagents.co.uk

LUNSFORD CROSS, BEXHILL-ON-SEA

Ninfield Road

0.8-acre site with planning permission for four detached homes of circa 2,152ft^2 (excluding the garage) with beautiful views over the adjoining grass meadows. Each property has rear gardens, garages and a front driveway.

Guide price: £1,250,000

Planning: Wealden District Council WD/2022/0334

Contact: Neville & Neville Estate Agents 01323 833630 contact@nevilleandneville.co.uk

ST. LEONARDS-ON-SEA

Battle Road

Building plot with consent for a two-bedroom detached house. The plot is part of the seller's garden and a further area may be available.

Guide price: £100,000

Planning: Hastings Borough Council HS/FA/24/00050

Contact: PCM Estate Agents 01424 839111 info@pcmestateagents.co.uk

DERBYSHIRE

RIPLEY

Nottingham Road

A plot of land with outline planning permission in place for a four-bedroom detached house with off-road parking.

Guide price: over £130,000

Planning: Amber Valley Borough Council AVA/2022/0229

Contact: Smartmove Homes 01773 570055 sales@smartmovehomes.co.uk

EAST YORKSHIRE

BEVERLEY

Langholm Close

Previously operated as sheltered housing for the elderly, the property features 14 bedrooms and 17 bathrooms. Planning consent granted to form two residential dwellings.

Guide price: £1,000,000

Planning: East Riding of Yorkshire Council 22/00644/FUL

Contact: JBrown - International 020 3641 8886 contact@jbrown.com

ESSEX

ARDLEIGH

Harwich Road

Plot featuring outbuildings including a barn with planning permission to build a 2,346ft^2 house. Include mains electric, water and power on site.

Guide price: £425,000

Planning: Tendring District Council 19/00297/FUL

Contact: Brooks Leney 01473 679843 ipswich@brooksleney.co.uk

CRESSING, BRAINTREE

Braintree Road

Two self build plots for residential development. Plot 1 has full consent for a 2,530ft^2 home, while plot 2 has full consent for a 2,800ft^2.

Guide price: £375,000

Planning: Braintree District Council 22/00720/FUL

Contact: Michaels Property Consultants 01376 337400 braintree@michaelsproperty.co.uk

DANBURY

Slough Road

Full planning permission granted to build a four-bedroom detached house in excess of 2,500 ft^2 on a third of an acre plot backing onto woodland.

Guide price: £650,000

Planning: Chelmsford City Council 24/00596/FUL

Contact: Church & Hawes 01621 782652 burnham@churchandhawes.com

EARLS COLNE

Station Road

Building plot of 42m x 6m with permission for a detached three-bedroom house of around 1,000ft^2 .

Guide price: £150,000

Planning: Braintree District Council 22/01729/FUL

Contact: Heritage 01787 722000 enquiries@essexheritage.co.uk

EPPING

Theydon Bois

A 0.37-acre plot with planning permission for a detached residence.

Guide price: £1,000,000

Planning: Epping Forest District Council EPF/0935/24

Contact: Butler & Stag 01992 667666 bow@butlerandstag.com

PURLEIGH

Chelmsford Road

Plot with full planning permission granted for a four-bedroom house of around 2,000ft^2.

Guide price: £300,000

Planning: Maldon District Council 24/00615/FUL

Contact: Church & Hawes 01245 225853 danbury@churchandhawes.com

GLOUCESTERSHIRE

TAYNTON

The Hen House

A 590m^2 former poultry house with full planning permission for conversion into a luxurious and modern single-storey residence

including housing for three cars.
Guide price: £795,000
Planning: Forest of Dean District Council Refer to Agent
Contact: Keller Williams Regional Head Office 020 7078 3939 enquiries@kwuk.com

YORKLEY, LYDNEY

Park End Road

Plot with consent for a detached dwelling and associated works.
Guide price: £110,000
Planning: Forest of Dean District Council P0287/23/FUL
Contact: Dean Estate Agents 01594 368202 lydney@deanestateagents.co.uk

GREATER LONDON

TWICKENHAM

Fourth Cross Road

An opportunity to buy a plot with full planning consent in place for two detached houses, the larger offering up to five bedrooms and the smaller offering two or three bedrooms.
Guide price: £1,375,000
Planning: London Borough of Richmond upon Thames 19/0338/FUL & 18/1442/FUL
Contact: Featherstone Leigh 020 8744 0595 twickenham.sales@featherstoneleigh.co.uk

LONDON

Hillyard Street

Recently granted consent for the demolition of the existing garages to allow for two mews style three-bedroom three-storey houses .
Guide price: £875,000
Planning: London Borough of Lambeth 23/02907/FUL
Contact: Unmod London 020 7223 3338 info@unmodlondon.co.uk

GREATER MANCHESTER

OLDHAM

Thornley Close, Grotton

A spacious semi-detached property with planning permission for a four-bedroom detached house in large mature gardens with outstanding views. The approx 0.75-acre plot has consent for an extra four-bedroom detached home with garden, garage and parking for both homes.
Guide price: £600,000
Planning: Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council FUL/346950/21
Contact: Private seller 07500 336779 louise.mustard@yahoo.co.uk

HAMPSHIRE

FOUR MARKS

Brislands Lane

A private plot of one acre with full planning permission to finish a striking architecturally designed country home of circa 3,500ft^2. The new five-bedroom house will be a highly energy efficient and well insulated timber frame construction with a proposed Air Source Heat Pump and an MVHR.
Guide price: £950,000
Planning: East Hampshire District Council Refer to Agent
Contact: Private seller 07967 741822 nichola.lugton@hotmail.co.uk

ROMSEY

Crampmoor Lane

A building plot with full planning permission granted for a four-bedroom detached family home in a beautiful setting. Measuring approx 1,922ft^2, the house will come with generous gardens.
Guide price: £450,000
Planning: Test Valley Borough Council 21/01004/FULLS
Contact: Henshaw Fox 01794 521339 homes@henshawfox.co.uk

WHITCHURCH

La Bresse Farm

Plot with planning permission for barn conversion to a residential dwelling.
Guide price: £925,000
Planning: Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council 24/00664/FUL
Contact: Strutt and Parker 01635 726822 marketing@struttandparker.com

HEREFORDSHIRE

HEREFORD

Garway Hill

Plot containing four barns with planning permission granted for conversion into residential use.
Guide price: £650,000
Planning: Herefordshire Council P241846/PA4
Contact: Glasshouse Properties 01432 644127 info@glasshouseproperties.com

ROSS-ON-WYE

Plot 3, The Farrowing Pasture, Llangarron

An idyllic 0.25-acre plot set in a tranquil hamlet with countryside views. It has planning permission in perpetuity for a three-bedroom detached house, garage and store.
Guide price: £250,000
Planning: Herefordshire Council 231475/F
Contact: Private seller 0033 782 909 636 lynevans528@ymail.com

HERTFORDSHIRE

DATCHWORTH, KNEBWORTH

Bramfield Road

Plot with planning consent granted for the construction of a four-bedroom detached property.
Guide price: £550,000
Planning: East Hertfordshire District Council 3/23/1036/FUL
Contact: Ashtons - Land and New Homes 01707 331100 saleswgc@ashtons.co.uk

KENT

HOLLINGBOURNE, MAIDSTONE

Troys Mead

Former residential garage site with full permission for demolition and replacement with a two-storey four-bedroom detached house of 130m^2.
Guide price: £274,998
Planning: Maidstone Borough Council 24/501857/FULL
Contact: Private seller marcus@v8ltd.co.uk

SEASALTER

Wauchope Road

A large plot with planning permission granted to build a five-bedroom detached house with gardens and off-street parking for several cars.
Guide price: £335,000
Planning: Canterbury City Council Ca/23/01009
Contact: Savills 020 7730 0822 sloanestreet@savills.com

WALDERSLADE

Lattore Boxley Road

Large detached house currently split into a pair of two-bedroom dwellings and a one-bedroom flat, currently all let with full planning permission for conversion into a four-bedroom home with double garage.
Guide price: £700,000
Planning: Maidstone Borough Council 23/504229/FULL
Contact: Private seller 07974 752237 farzadfard@ymail.com

LANCASHIRE

BRINSCALL, CHORLEY

Lodge Bank

Land of circa 0.8 acres with planning permission for an ultra modern, detached dwelling. The land currently comprises former boarding kennels, which are to be demolished.
Guide price: £500,000
Planning: Chorley Council 24/00511/FUL
Contact: Ben Rose Estate Agents 01257 221009 chorley@ben-rose.co.uk

LEICESTERSHIRE

GLENFIELD

Ashleigh Road

A plot of land with outline planning permission for two detached houses. Currently there is a two-storey dwelling with a detached garage. This may need to be demolished and cleared.
Guide price: £270,000
Planning: Blaby District Council 21/1458/OUT
Contact: Focus 0116 296 1000 info@focus-homes.co.uk

LINCOLNSHIRE

GREATFORD

Main Street

An individual building plot extending to approx 0.38 acres within a popular village. Planning permission has been granted, subject to conditions, for a six-bedroom two-storey detached family dwelling extending to approx 350m^2.
Guide price: £525,000
Planning: South Kesteven District Council S23/0044
Contact: Richardson 01780 762433 post@richardsonsurveyors.co.uk

NEWBALL COMMON

Top Yard, Gate Cliffe Farm

Site of circa 1.95 acres with full planning permission to build a new four-bedroom detached house. The house will offer around 197m^2 of accommodation.
Guide price: £235,000
Planning: West Lindsey District Council Refer to Agent
Contact: Brown & Co

ESSEX

PEBMARSH, HALSTEAD

Cricks Farm, Hill House Road

Plot of just under one acre with planning permission granted for a 1,500ft^2 bungalow following the demolition of two silos.
Guide price: £275,000
Planning: Braintree District Council 23/02756/FUL
Contact: Stanfords 01206 842156 info@stanfords-colchester.co.uk

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NaCSBA National Custom & Self Build Association

WEBBS MEADOW

LOCATION Lyonshall, Herefordshire

GUIDE PRICE From £185,000

AREA 698m² to 788m²

PLANNING Herefordshire Council P221922/O

CONTACT Webbs Meadow enquiries@webbsmeadows.co.uk

Situated in the historic village of Lyonshall, Webbs Meadow (Phase two) is an exciting opportunity to join a community of budding self builders, born from the original award-winning development.

The idyllic site consists of four serviced plots, with just one plot remaining for sale, and is brought to the market in partnership with Oakwrights, experts in the design and construction of oak framed buildings for over 25 years.

You can work with Oakwrights and their in-house design team in order to finalise the design and layout of your home. Whether you prefer an open-plan design or would like a large pantry, the goal is to meet your lifestyle.

A range of layouts and styles is on offer to suit different budgets and needs. You can also opt for anything from a full turnkey solution to the option of self managing your own project, depending on experience and time available. With outline planning permission already granted for a detached dwelling with utilities and highways access, full planning consent will then be applied for.

The development will create high-quality homes that complement the history and natural beauty of the local area, set within a thriving rural community that includes a local pub and farm shop.

1 An example single-storey home

2 An Oakwrights family house

3 The site will enjoy amenities like a farm shop and pub

4 & 5 Different designs and layouts are available

6 The small community of homes

JHWalter 07919 694224
helen.goddard@brown-co.com

SCOPWICK
Main Street
Two plots available as a whole or separately. Planning permission for a five-bedroom detached house.
Guide price: £400,000
Planning: North Kesteven District Council 22/0417/FUL
Contact: Pygott & Crone 01522 568822 lincoln@pygott-crone.com

THURLBY
Church Street
Plot with planning permission for the conversion of the existing Church Hall into a residential dwelling providing single-storey living accommodation.
Guide price: £150,000
Planning: South Kesteven District Council S23/1922
Contact: Richardson 01780 762433 post@richardsonsurveyors.co.uk

NORFOLK

BARTON TURF
Hall Road
One of two waterside plots with detailed consent for a detached, single-storey four-bedroom home with double garage. The plot is approx 0.2 acres with over 100ft of private quay heading along with a mooring dock measuring approx 45ft x 15ft.
Guide price: £375,000
Planning: Broads Authority BA/1985/7694/HISTAP
Contact: Waterside Estate Agents 01692 670400 sales@watersideestateagents.com

GISSING, DISS
Lower Street
Plot of around 0.29 acres with full planning permission for the erection of a six-bedroom detached house of around 3,170ft^2 with garage, parking and large gardens to the rear.
Guide price: £100,000
Planning: South Norfolk District Council Refer to Agent
Contact: Whittley Parish 01379 640808 sales@whittleyparish.com

NEWTON FLOTMAN, NORWICH
Flordon Road
Individual building plot of almost half an acre in a secluded setting. At the end of a long private driveway serving just four other properties, this plot has outline planning permission for the conversion of the existing steel portal framed building into a modern four-bedroom open-plan home.
Guide price: £275,000
Planning: South Norfolk District Council 2021/2697
Contact: Aldridge Landsell 01508 531434 longstratton@aldridgelansdell.co.uk

WISBECH
Lynn Road
Plot of 858m^2 with detailed planning permission for a detached house and detached garage with studio above.
Guide price: £115,000
Planning: King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council 22/00991/F
Contact: Pattinson Commercial 0845 146 1586 / 0191 239 3252 commercial@pattinson.co.uk

NORTH YORKSHIRE

HIGH BENTHAM
Main Street
Former 17th-century Horse & Farrier Inn has detailed consent and listed building consent for conversion into a three-bedroom home with detached garage and garden.
Guide price: £250,000
Planning: Craven District Council ZA24/24850/FUL, ZA24/25848/LBC
Contact: Richard Turner & Son 01524 261444 bentham@rturner.co.uk

HORTON-IN-RIBBLESDALE, SETTLE
Studford
Eysdey Barn has consent for conversion into a two-bedroom property with a garden and parking. The barn is to be repointed and roofed with Yorkshire stone in order to stay in keeping with the local area.
Guide price: £199,950
Planning: Yorkshire Dales National Park C/44/89A
Contact: Richard Turner & Son 01524 261444 bentham@rturner.co.uk

YORK
Claxton
The property previously formed part of a holiday letting complex, set in approx 0.66 acres. The swimming pool building has been granted permission for conversion into a three-bedroom dwelling providing over 2,500ft^2 of living space.
Guide price: £250,000
Planning: Hartlepool Borough Council ZE23/06904/FUL
Contact: Stephensons Estate Agents 01904 625533 york@stephensons4property.co.uk

NORTHUMBERLAND

MORPETH
Acklinton
Plot with full planning consent for four residential dwellings; a four-bedroom detached house, a three-bedroom bungalow and a pair of three-bedroom detached homes.
Guide price: £400,000
Planning: Northumberland County Council 22/02845/FUL
Contact: Rook Matthews Sayer 01665 713358 amble@rookmatthewssayer.co.uk

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

BLEASBY
Goverton
Opportunity to acquire two building plots with full planning consent for a pair of four-bedroom detached two-storey dwellings. Both have planning for detached double garages.
Guide price: £500,000
Planning: Newark and Sherwood District Council 20/02363/FUL
Contact: Gascoignes 01636 813245 southwell@gascoignes.co.uk

CARLTON
Poplar Close
Plot of land measuring 2,205m^2 with planning permission granted for the construction of five dwellings.
Guide price: £375,000
Planning: Gedling Borough Council 2023/0865
Contact: Auction House London 020 7625 9007 info@auctionhouselondon.co.uk

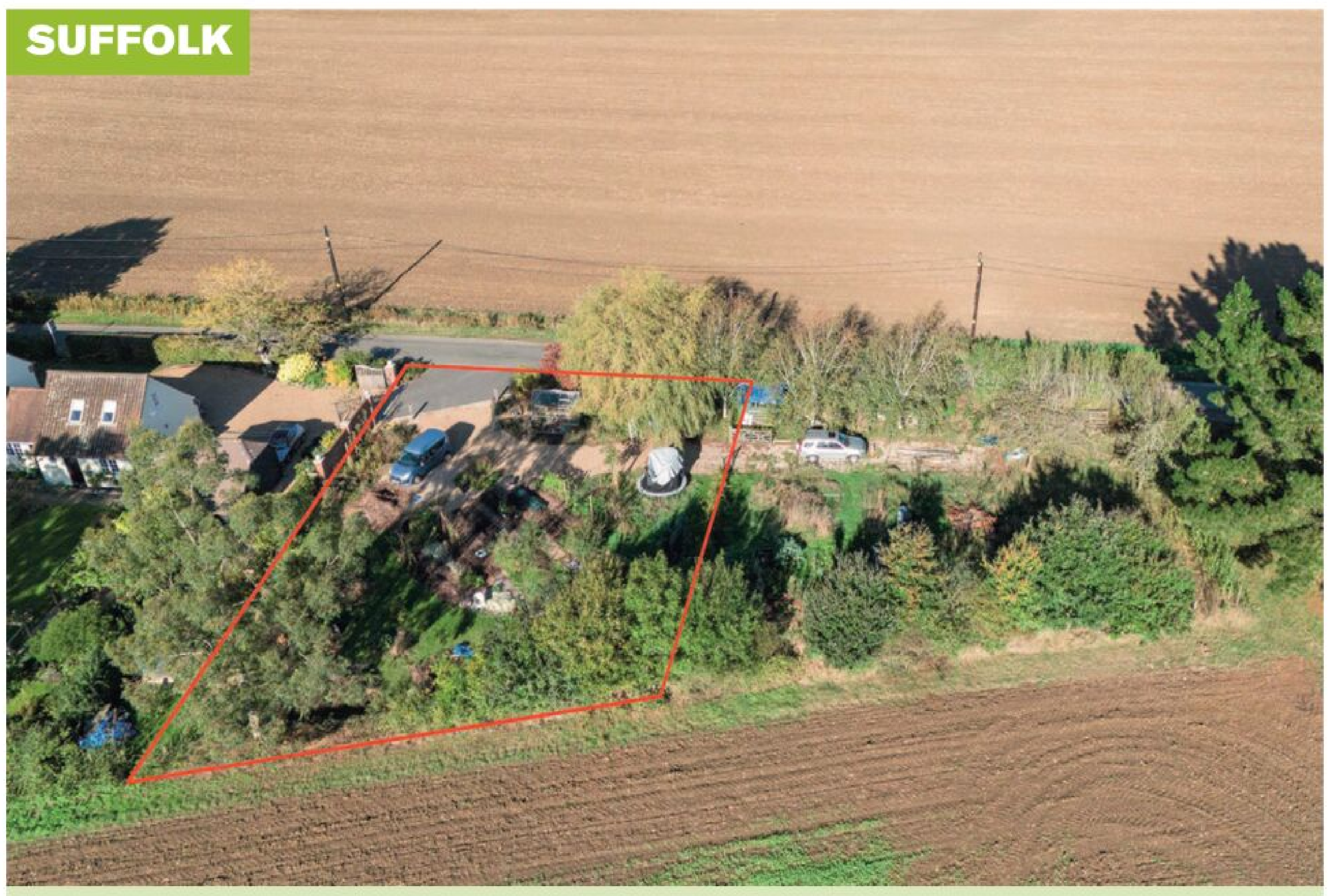
RETFORD
Church Street
Plot of land measuring circa 0.25 acres, with outline planning consent for a single-storey home with parking.
Guide price: £150,000
Planning: Bassetlaw District Council 23/01084/OUT
Contact: Alexander Jacob Ltd 01777 566400 info@alexanderjacob.co.uk

SHERWOOD
Leonard Avenue

NORFOLK

WISBECH
Lynn Road
Plot of 858m^2 with detailed consent for a detached house and detached garage with studio above.
Guide price: £115,000
Planning: King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council 22/00991/F
Contact: Pattinson Commercial 0845 146 1586 / 01912 393252 commercial@pattinson.co.uk

SUFFOLK



ROMSEY
Crampmoor Road
A building plot with full planning permission for a four-bedroom detached family home of around 1,922ft^2 with generous gardens.
Guide price: £450,000
Planning: Test Valley Borough Council 21/01004/FULLS
Contact: Henshaw Fox 01794 521339 homes@henshawfox.co.uk

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***A place is based on one device - for one or two people.**

ARGYLL AND BUTE

RHU
Land adj. Well House, Round Maple
A 0.8-acre site with planning permission for the erection of a single four-bedroom one-and-a-half-storey home of around 3,000ft^2.
Guide price: over £175,000
Planning: Argyll and Bute Council 23/01503/LIB & 23/01502/PP
Contact: Clyde Property 01436 670780 helensburgh@clydeproperty.co.uk

For sale via Modern Method of Auction, a building plot with planning permission for the demolition of a garage and the erection of a single-storey dwelling, located just a short distance from Nottingham city centre.
Guide price: £75,000
Planning: Nottingham City Council 24/00761/PFUL3
Contact: William H Brown 0115 958 7766 nottingham@williamhbrown.co.uk

RUTLAND

GREETHAM
Land South of Pond Lane
A plot within a conservation area with full planning permission for a four-bedroom cottage-style detached home with off-road parking and split level gardens.
Guide price: £175,000
Planning: Rutland County Council 2024/0259/FUL
Contact: Richardson 01780 762433 post@richardsonsurveyors.co.uk

GREETHAM
Oak House Court
Plot with full planning permission for the conversion of a former residential home into five individual dwellings with a range of layouts and sizes.
Guide price: £750,000
Planning: Rutland County Council Refer to Agent
Contact: Richardson Surveyors 01780 762433 post@richardsonsurveyors.co.uk

SHROPSHIRE

ASTON BOTTERELL
Church Side Barn
Opportunity to convert and extend a traditional timber, stone and brick barn into a detached dwelling in a rural area. Full planning granted to create a 280m^2 four-bedroom house with ample parking and garden areas.
Guide price: £260,000
Planning: Shropshire Council 22/04599/FUL
Contact: Private seller 07598 817626 richardgeorge1234@gmail.com

SOMERSET

CONGRESBURY
Venus Street
Full permission for the erection of a 2,443ft^2 one-and-a-half-storey four- to five-bedroom home on a building plot of approx 0.24 acres.
Guide price: £350,000
Planning: North Somerset Council 23/P/1792/MMA
Contact: Debbie Fortune Estate Agents 01934 862370 salesadmin@debbiefortune.co.uk

NORTH CURRY
Plot 1 - Egrets Landing
A 1.92-acre plot with full consent for a four- to five-bedroom house of 2,674ft^2 with garage and garden.
Guide price: £275,000
Planning: Somerset Council - Somerset West & Taunton area (Taunton Deane) Refer to Agent
Contact: Moorhaven Developments 01752 892411 laura@moorhaven.org

YENSTON, TEMPLECOMBE
Whitechurch Lane
A rural plot with consent for a four-bedroom detached house set within approx 1.5 acres of gardens.
Guide price: £450,000
Planning: Somerset Council - South Somerset Area 24/00137/REM
Contact: Hambledon Estate Agents 01963 34000 wincanton@hambledon.net

SOUTH YORKSHIRE

DONCASTER
Dunsville
A site with full planning permission for the erection of two detached homes, one four-bedroom detached house and one four-bedroom bungalow.
Guide price: £440,000
Planning: Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council 23/01914/FUL
Contact: LSL Land Nationwide 01302 215586 nationwideland@lslnewhomes.co.uk

BESSACARR
Warning Tongue Lane
Large building plot with full planning permission for a seven-bedroom 6,000ft^2 detached home with a detached double garage.
Guide price: £650,000
Planning: Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council 21/01904/FUL
Contact: Fine & Country 01302 591000 bawtry@fineandcountry.com

STAFFORDSHIRE

ALSAGERS BANK
Ivy Cottage, High Street
Building plot with derelict stone cottage. Plot comes with permission for the demolition of the existing building and the construction of a replacement dwelling.
Guide price: £60,000
Planning: Newcastle-Under-Lyme District Council 23/00103/OUT
Contact: Private seller gailmakepeace@hotmail.co.uk

BURTON-ON-TRENT
Nelson Street
Single building plot with unreserved planning permission granted for residential development.
Guide price: £70,000
Planning: East Staffordshire Borough Council P/2024/00220
Contact: Your Move 01283 545444 burtonontrent@your-move.co.uk

KNUTTON, NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME
Knutton Lane
Single plot with outline planning permission granted for a three-bedroom detached dwelling.
Guide price: £38,000
Planning: Newcastle-Under-Lyme District Council 23/00933/OUT
Contact: Mark Buxton 01782 898143 hello@markbuxton.co.uk

STAFFORD
Eccleshall Road
Plot with full planning passed for six detached residential homes close to Stafford town centre. Planning includes space for car parking.
Guide price: £750,000
Planning: Stafford Borough Council 22/35820/FUL
Contact: James du Pavey 01785 851886 eccleshall@jamesdupavey.co.uk

SUFFOLK

EDWARDSTONE
Well House, Round Maple
A 0.2-acre building plot occupying a wonderful rural location with full consent for a 131m^2 detached period style house with cart lodge garage.
Guide price: £270,000
Planning: Babergh District Council DC/18/03944
Contact: Chapman Stickels 01473 372372 info@chapmanstickels.co.uk

LOWESTOFT
Somerton Avenue
Planning permission already granted for a three-bedroom terraced house with off-road parking, a garage and front and rear gardens.
Guide price: £40,000
Planning: Waveney District Council DC/23/3994/FUL
Contact: Paul Hubbard Estate Agents 01502 531218 info@paulhubbardonline.com

STEEPLE BUMPSTEAD
Sturmer Road
A 2.03-acre site with planning permission to develop an agricultural building into five two-bedroom, 850ft^2 single-storey homes.
Guide price: £500,000
Planning: Braintree District Council 22/03162/COUPA
Contact: Pottrill Holland 07751 886249 info@pottrillholland.co.uk

WARWICKSHIRE

KINETON
Southam Street
Central village plot of 0.38 acres with full planning permission for a single property of up to 3,509ft^2.
Guide price: £400,000
Planning: Stratford-on-Avon District Council 22/02271/FUL
Contact: Colebrook Seccombes 01926 640498 sales@colebrookseccombes.co.uk

WEST YORKSHIRE

ELLAND
Park Road
Plot with outline planning permission for a residential development of two semi-detached dwellings.
Guide price: £110,000
Planning: Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council 20/01241/OUT
Contact: Dawson Estates 01422 370320 info@dawsonestates.co.uk

HUDDERSFIELD
New North Road
A large plot of land located close to central Huddersfield. Planning permission granted for three houses.
Guide price: £350,000
Planning: Kirklees Council

2019/60/92111
Contact: Bramleys 01484 530361 info@bramleys1.co.uk

LOW MOOR, BRADFORD
Brayshaw Fold
Plot of approx 0.43 acres with detailed planning consent for two pairs of three-bedroom semi-detached houses of approx 980ft^2 each and a four-bedroomed chalet bungalow of approx 1,460ft^2.
Guide price: £275,000
Planning: Bradford Metropolitan District Council 20/01226/OUT & 21/02366/FUL & 21/04645/FUL
Contact: Paul Hubbard Estate Agents 01502 531218 info@paulhubbardonline.com

WILTSHIRE

CHOLDERTON
Walnut Cottage
Level plot of around 0.6 acres on the Hampshire/Wiltshire border, with views across the village and fields. Planning is granted for a two-storey, four-bedroom home and, with the demolition of a garage and the first trench dug, there has been a 'meaningful start' to allow planning to remain indefinitely. The council is open to alternative designs subject to the buyer gaining planning consent.
Guide price: £550,000
Planning: Wiltshire Council PL/2021/10166
Contact: Private seller kennethrmcquarrie@gmail.com

WORCESTERSHIRE

DROITWICH
Hanbury Road
Substantial building plot with full planning permission for a detached five-bedroom three-storey modern house with an open-plan design. The house will be substantially energy self-sufficient, with solar panels and a heat pump. An office/guest house has been built at the top of the garden with its own toilet, shower, insulation and underfloor heating. The site measures 9.23m x 40m and is located close to the canal towpath.
Guide price: £190,000
Planning: Wychavon District Council 21/000578 & 24/00064
Contact: Private seller woofy1@hotmail.co.uk

SCOTLAND

ARGYLL AND BUTE

AROS, ISLE OF MULL
Crannich Farm, Plots 1 & 6
One of two plots for residential development, located in a picturesque rural setting at Crannich Farm. Plot 1, extending to approx 0.84 acres, while plot 6 is approx 0.61 acres (0.25 hectares) and is currently occupied by a general-purpose agricultural shed. An option exists to acquire additional land adjacent to this plot, subject to negotiation.
Guide price: £90,000 per plot
Planning: Argyll and Bute Council 23/02351/PPP & 22/02407/PPP
Contact: Bell Ingram 01631 566122 oban@bellingram.co.uk

TAYNUILT
Tigh na Buaile
Planning permission granted to demolish the existing dwelling, known as Tigh na Buaile, together with the associated outbuildings, and the erection of a one-and-a-half-storey four-bedroom dwelling.
Guide price: £120,000
Planning: Argyll and Bute Council 24/01301/PP
Contact: Dawsons Estate Agents 01631 563901 info@dawsonsestateagents.co.uk

HIGHLAND

LOCHCARRON
Plot 1, Slumbay
Plot extending to 0.24 acres with planning permission in principle for the construction of a single-storey or one-and-a-half-storey villa.
Guide price: £65,000
Planning: Highland Council 22/04442/pip
Contact: Innes & Mackay 01463 251200 property@innesmackay.com

PORTSKERRA, MELVICH
Hillside View
A 0.75-acre elevated plot with outstanding coastal views. Planning permission in principle granted for residential development.
Guide price: £35,000
Planning: Highland Council 22/02533/PIP
Contact: Yvonne Fitzgerald Properties 01847 307016 enquiries@yvonnefitzgeraldproperties.co.uk

NORTH AYRSHIRE

BEITH
Hesselhead
Level building plot with stunning views of the countryside. Full planning permission has been granted for a modern four-bedroom home with an open-plan design and a detached double garage. The house is approx 265m^2 and the plot extends to around 2,500m^2.
Guide price: £140,000
Planning: North Ayrshire Council 18/00309/PP
Contact: McEwan Fraser Legal 0131 524 9797 mandy.taylor@mcewanfraserlegal.co.uk

PERTH AND KINROSS

INCHTURE
Craigdallie Cottage
4.5 acres of land with consent for either a 1.5-storey four-bedroom house with a southern facing balcony, annexe and large double garage, or for the reinstatement, alterations and extensions to the existing house, plus the erection of two dwellings.
Guide price: £175,000
Planning: Perth and Kinross Council 23/02087/FLL & 21/01986/FLL
Contact: Rettie & Co 0131 220 4160 mail@rettie.co.uk

WALES

CARMARTHENSHIRE

CARWAY, KIDWELLY
Carway Hall
Level rural plot with planning permission granted for the erection of a detached bungalow.
Guide price: £80,000
Planning: Carmarthenshire County Council PL/03863
Contact: Morgan & Davies 01267 312729 lampeter@morganandavies.co.uk

GLANAMMAN
Cwmamman Road
A prepared and mainly level building plot located in close proximity to Ammanford town. Consent is in place for development.
Guide price: £97,000
Planning: Carmarthenshire County Council PL/04772
Contact: Anna Ashton Estate Agents 01269 839392 ammanford@annaashton.wales

GORSLAS, LLANELLI
Church Road
Plot with outline planning permission for the construction of a pair of detached residential dwellings.
Guide price: £200,000
Planning: Carmarthenshire County Council PL/06671
Contact: Thomas & Thomas 01269 597949 ammanford@thomasandthomas-property.co.uk

PONTYATES, LLANELLI
Heol Nazareth
A 0.2-acre plot with countryside views and full planning permission granted for residential development.
Guide price: £90,000
Planning: Carmarthenshire County Council PL/05757
Contact: West Wales Properties 01437 762626 / 0845 094 3006 haverfordwest@westwalesproperties.co.uk

WHITLAND
Isaf
Large plot currently comprising a barn. Planning permission has been granted for its conversion into a two-bedroom dwelling.
Guide price: £170,000
Planning: Carmarthenshire County Council Pl/07196
Contact: John Francis 01834 861812 narberth@johnfrancis.co.uk

DENBIGHSHIRE

LLANGOLLEN
Cwmalis Road
For sale by Public Auction at 2pm on 5th December. Plot of around 0.18 acres with outline consent granted for the erection of a single split-level dwelling.
Guide price: £40,000
Planning: Wrexham County Borough Council P/2021/0983
Contact: Bowen Son & Watson 01978 860346 llangollen@bowensonandwatson.co.uk

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Want more plot finding advice? Join us at Build It Live for our annual exhibitions in Kent, Bicester and Exeter.

Talk to the experts
Our planning experts Julia Riddle and Martin Gaine will be on hand all weekend to answer your questions and help make that first stage of your project a little easier to digest.

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Whether it's a new build, renovation or extension, creating your dream home starts with obtaining planning consent. Our plot and planning specialist guides you through the essential elements, including submitting your application, and offers invaluable advice on finding the right plot of land.

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Check out our gallery of current available plots in the region, plus the latest serviced plot projects across the UK. Discover everything you need to know about finding the right plot for your project.

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In Focus

Staircases

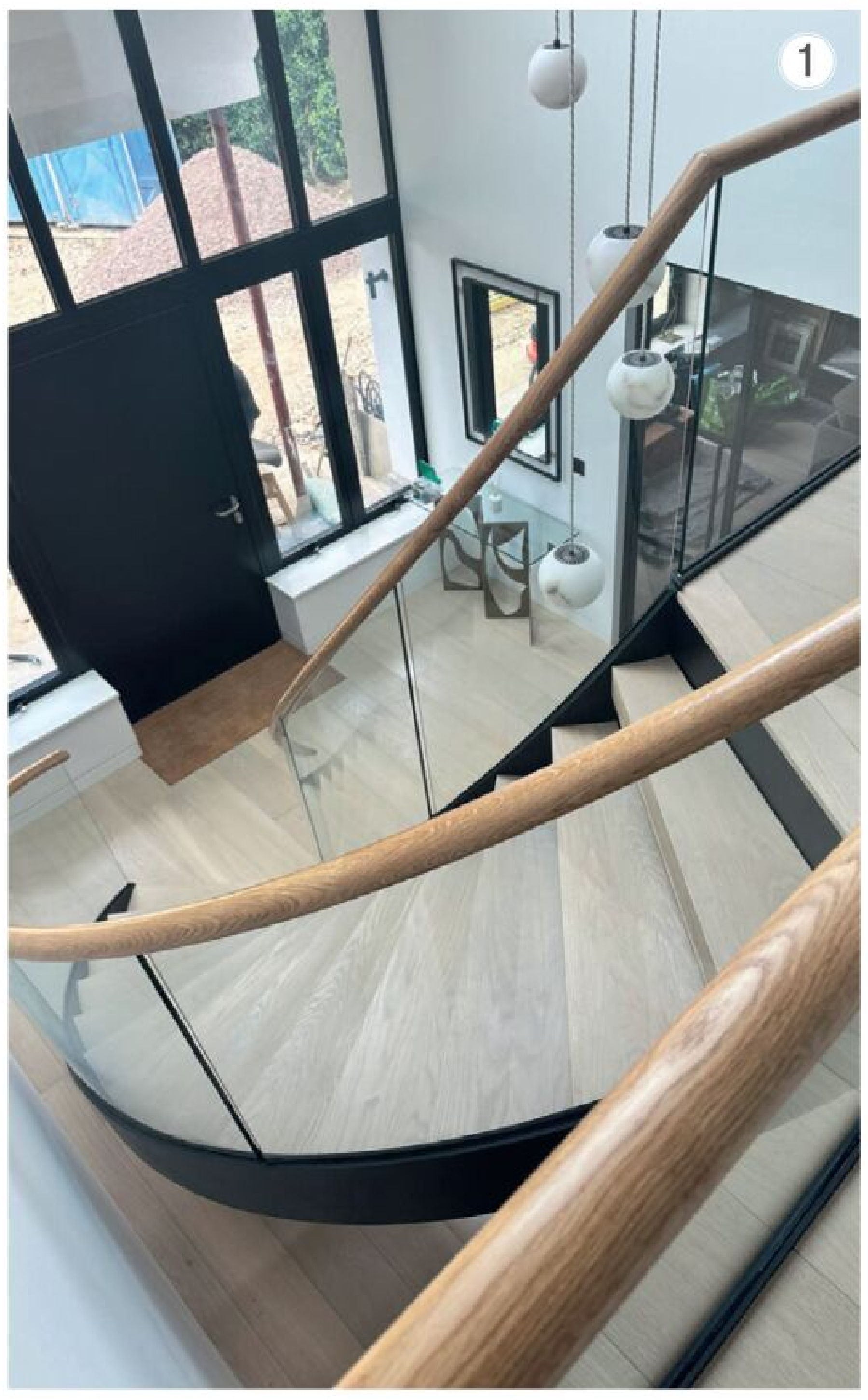
Are you looking for the right flight to elevate your home's interior architecture? This month, we shine the spotlight on the dedicated stair designers and suppliers who can help you create a sculptural centrepiece

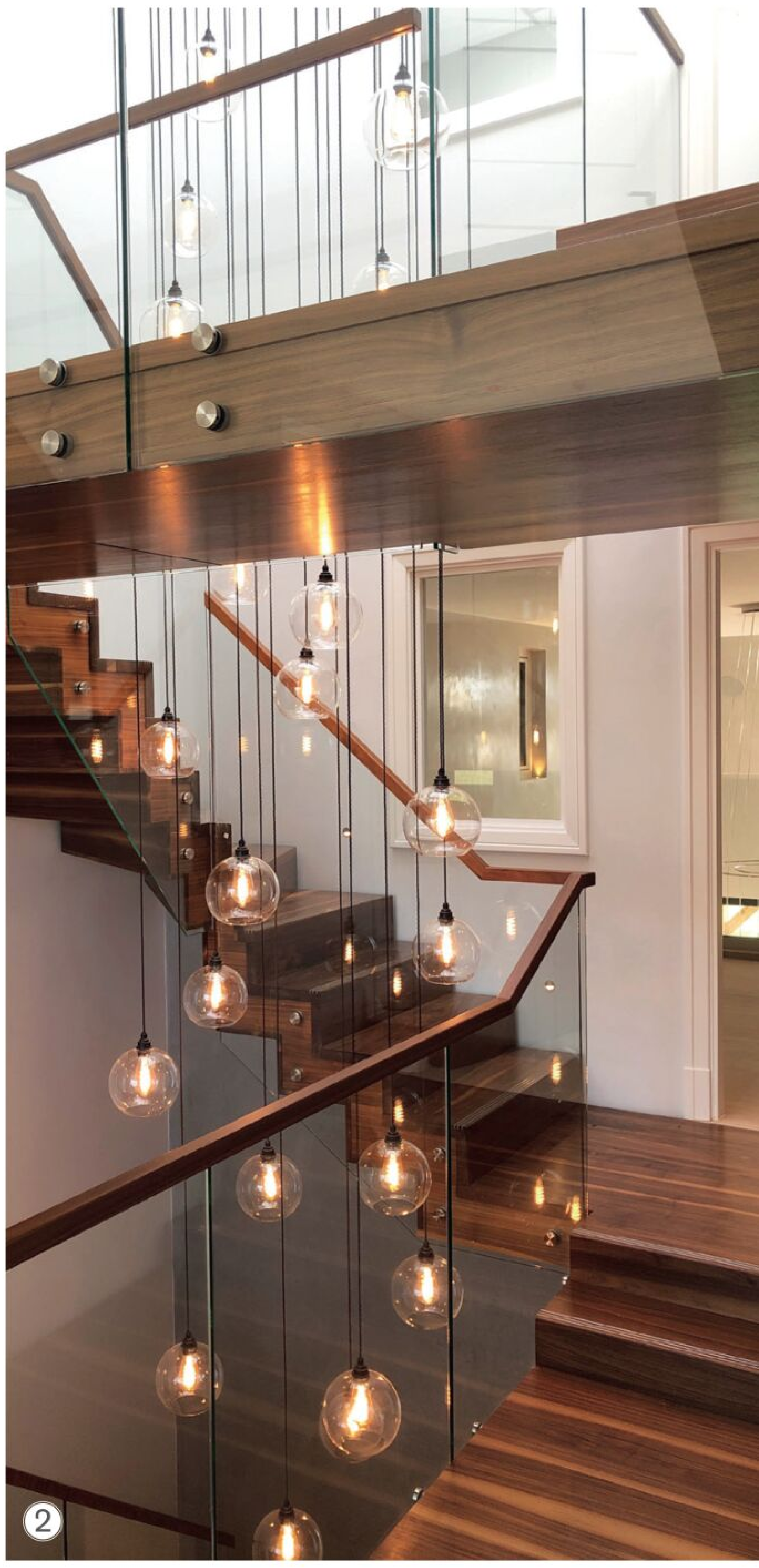
Whether you're self building or renovating, if there's one interior feature that's worthy of special attention, it's the staircase. A great flight can set the tone for your new home's interiors – delivering a healthy dose of sculptural wow factor alongside its functional job.

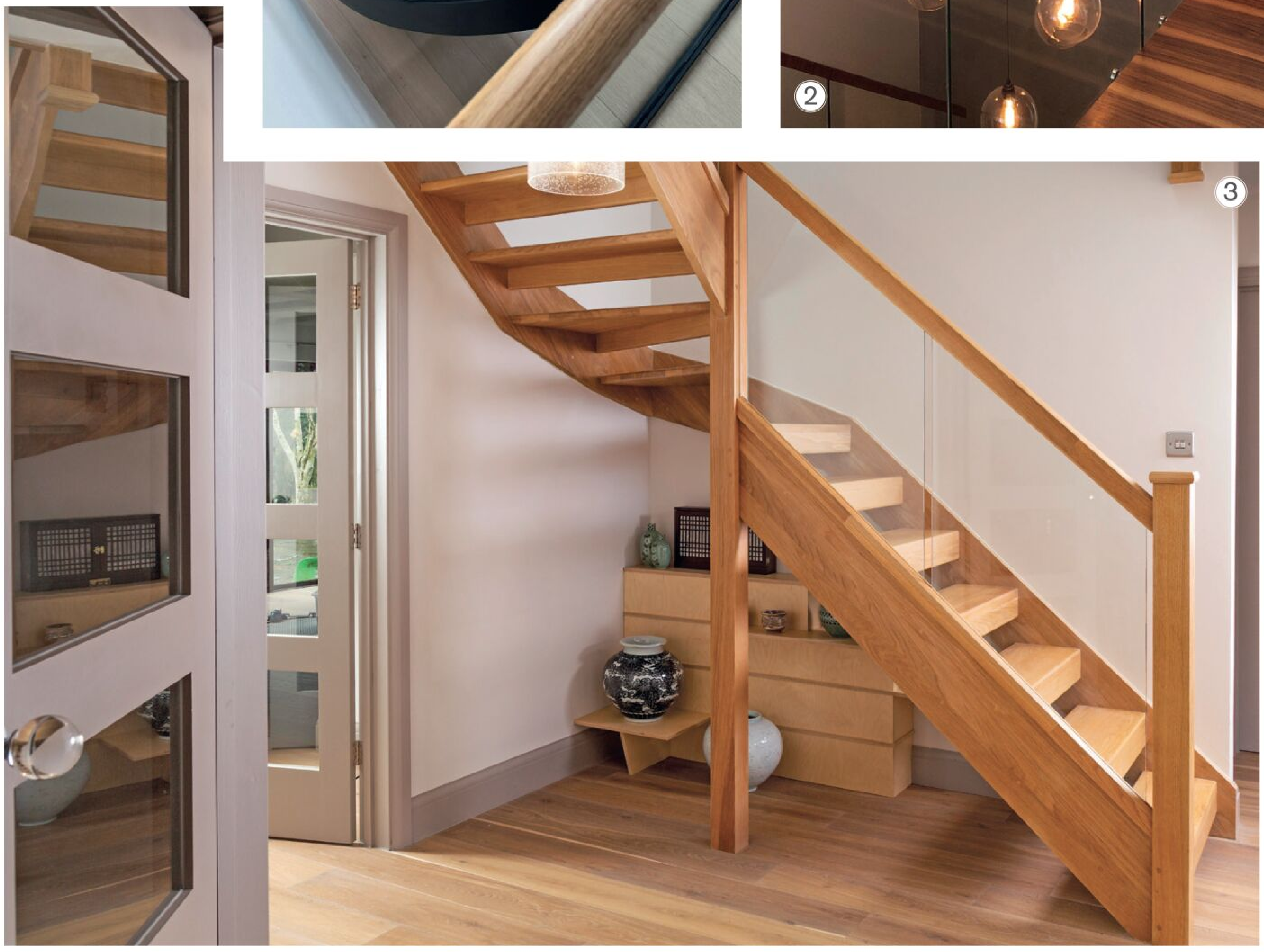
Innovative design and quality materials are, of course, two key ingredients for a fabulous staircase. But just as important are the technical details. A good supplier will ensure your new flight not only looks fantastic, but also makes the best use of the available space and overcomes any technical obstacles. With that in mind, it's a good idea to bring your staircase designer on board early on in the house planning process. This allows them to offer suggestions that can make a real difference in achieving the aesthetic and floor plan you envision for your home.

For instance, they can advise on whether your flight design might need extra support in the walls or floors; whether turning the stair could help improve use of space across both storeys (and, if so, where in the flight the turn should be made); or even if there's a more cost-effective way to achieve the kind of feature staircase you're after. If you're thinking of going up into the loft at a later date, they may also be able to guide you on how to streamline the design in order to more easily accommodate the future flight.

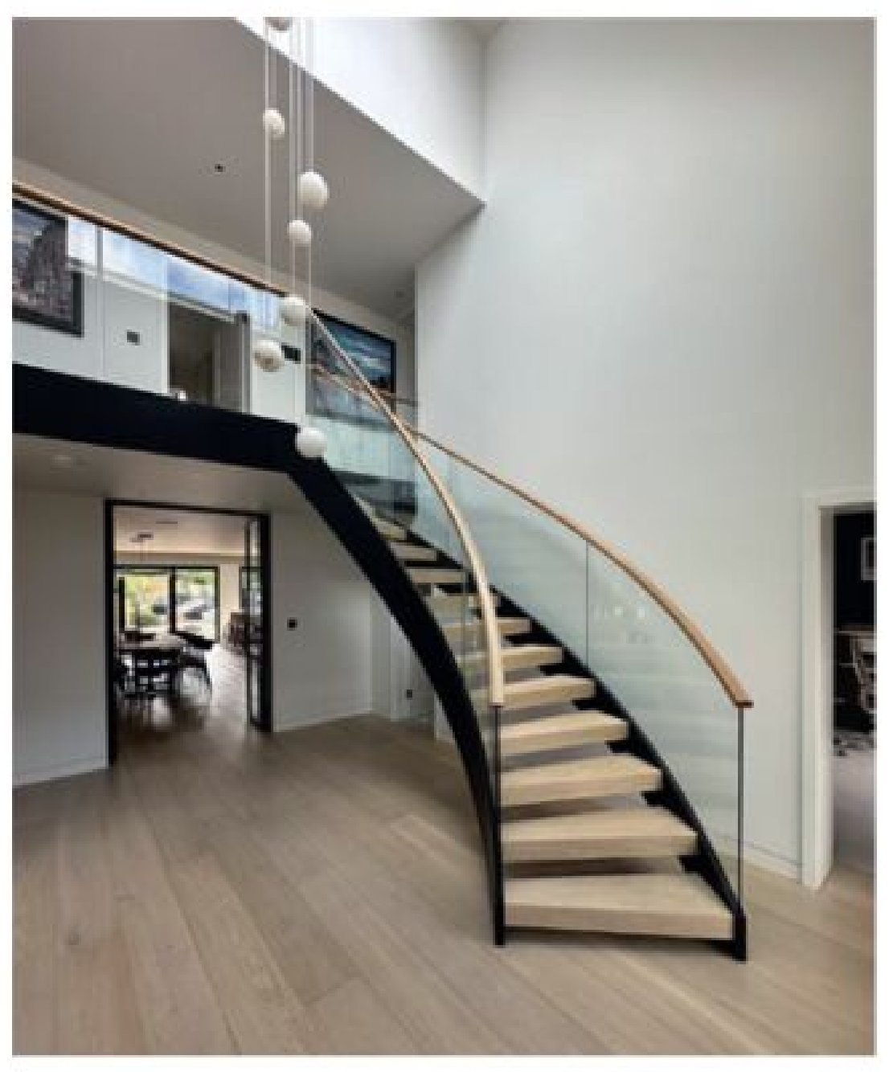
A quality staircase is a lifetime investment, one that – as opposed to a kitchen or bathroom – is unlikely to be ripped out and replaced. So, it pays to put extra time, effort and budget into this part of your project. A bespoke design will undoubtedly add wow and value to the finished house; but there are also some excellent off-the-shelf and kit flights available. So, there are options to suit a range of projects and budgets.







1 Shortlisted for Best Staircase at the 2024 Build It Awards, this helical feature flight by Edge Bespoke (www.edgebespoke.co.uk) appears to float between storeys. **2** The warm walnut wood structure of this stair by Zakuna (www.zakuna.co.uk) conceals the supporting structure, allowing the steps to zig zag seamlessly between each floor. **3** Designed by the homeowner in conjunction with the team at Stairbox (www.stairbox.com), this solid oak design features a three-tread winder, solid oak stringer, half-risers and an embedded glass balustrade



Exceptional contemporary stairs

Edge Bespoke designs, manufactures, and installs high-quality, contemporary staircases for self-build and renovation projects. Our feature staircases create a stunning focal point for your home, blending steel, wood, and glass. With over 25 years of experience, our family-run business collaborates with clients in every step, delivering CAD-designed solutions that go beyond traditional timber styles for a true "wow" factor.

EDGE

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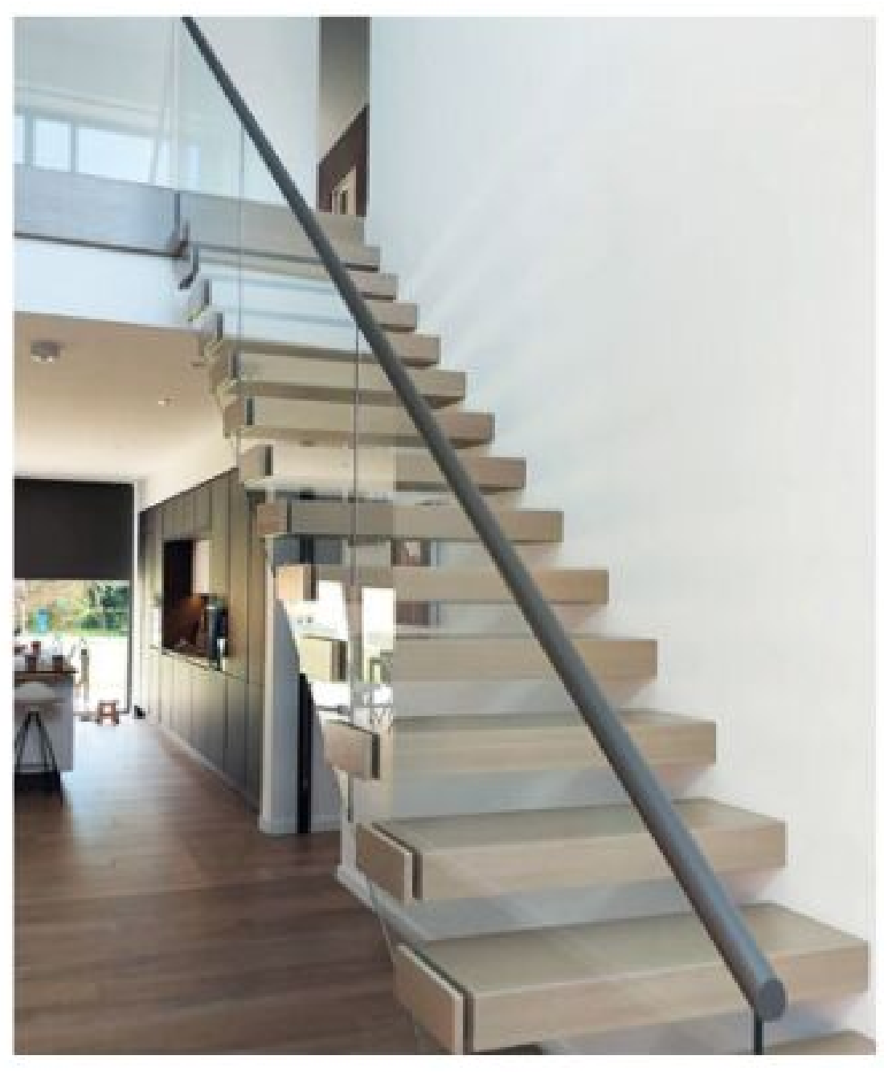
Web: www.edgebespoke.co.uk

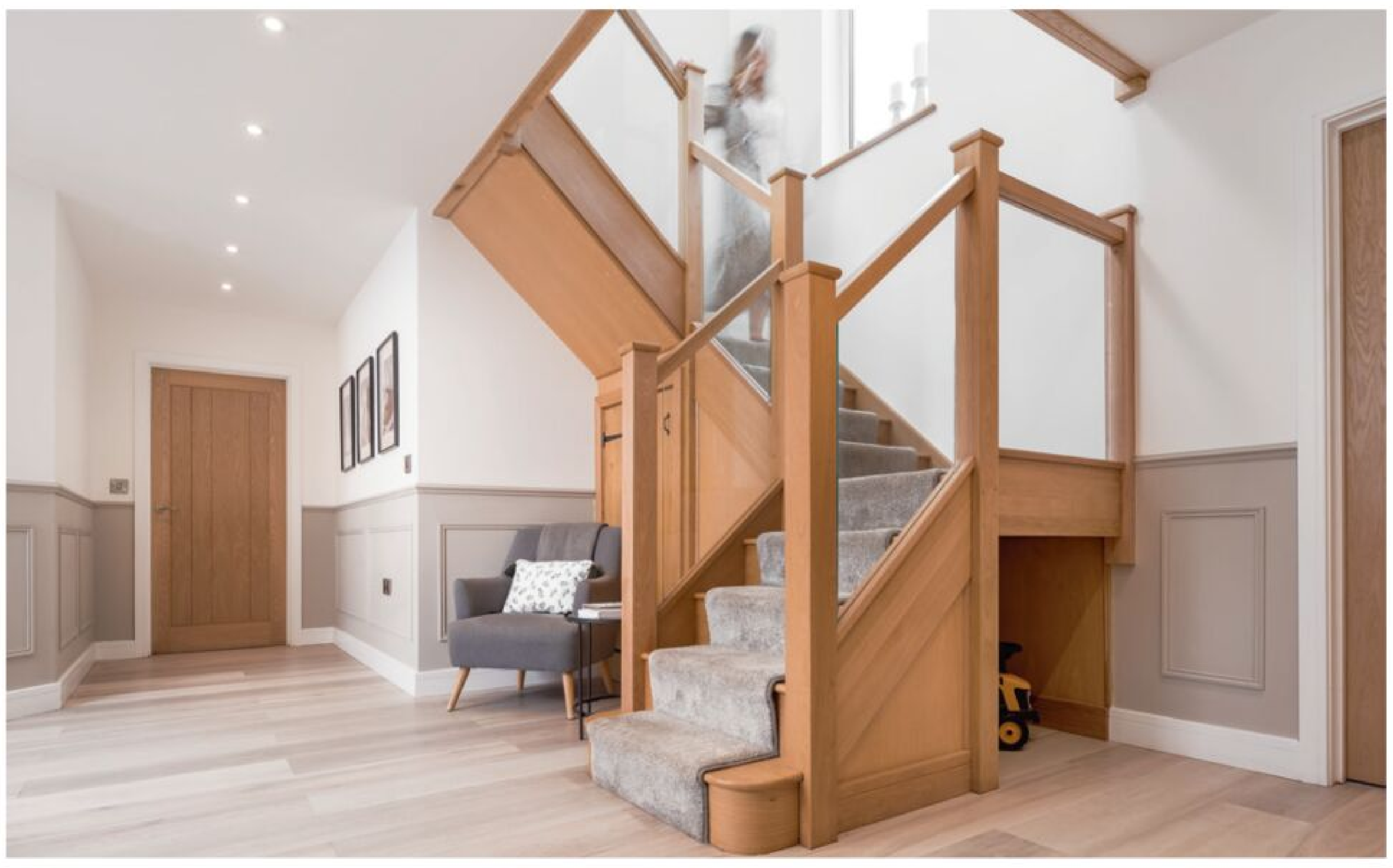


Zakuna Bespoke Staircases

Zakuna staircases exude quality, beauty and perfection. They are stunning, crafted masterpieces. Each component is engineered with unparalleled precision. Contemporary styles include cantilever, central string, strings under treads, strings from sides, spiral and helical to enhance any luxury residential home or commercial property. Zakuna provide a personal service with consultation and advice on design, configuration and specification, site surveys, 3D modelling, structural calculations and design solutions for complex design issues.

ZAKUNA
architectural products

Tel: 01243 884104 **Web:** www.zakuna.co.uk



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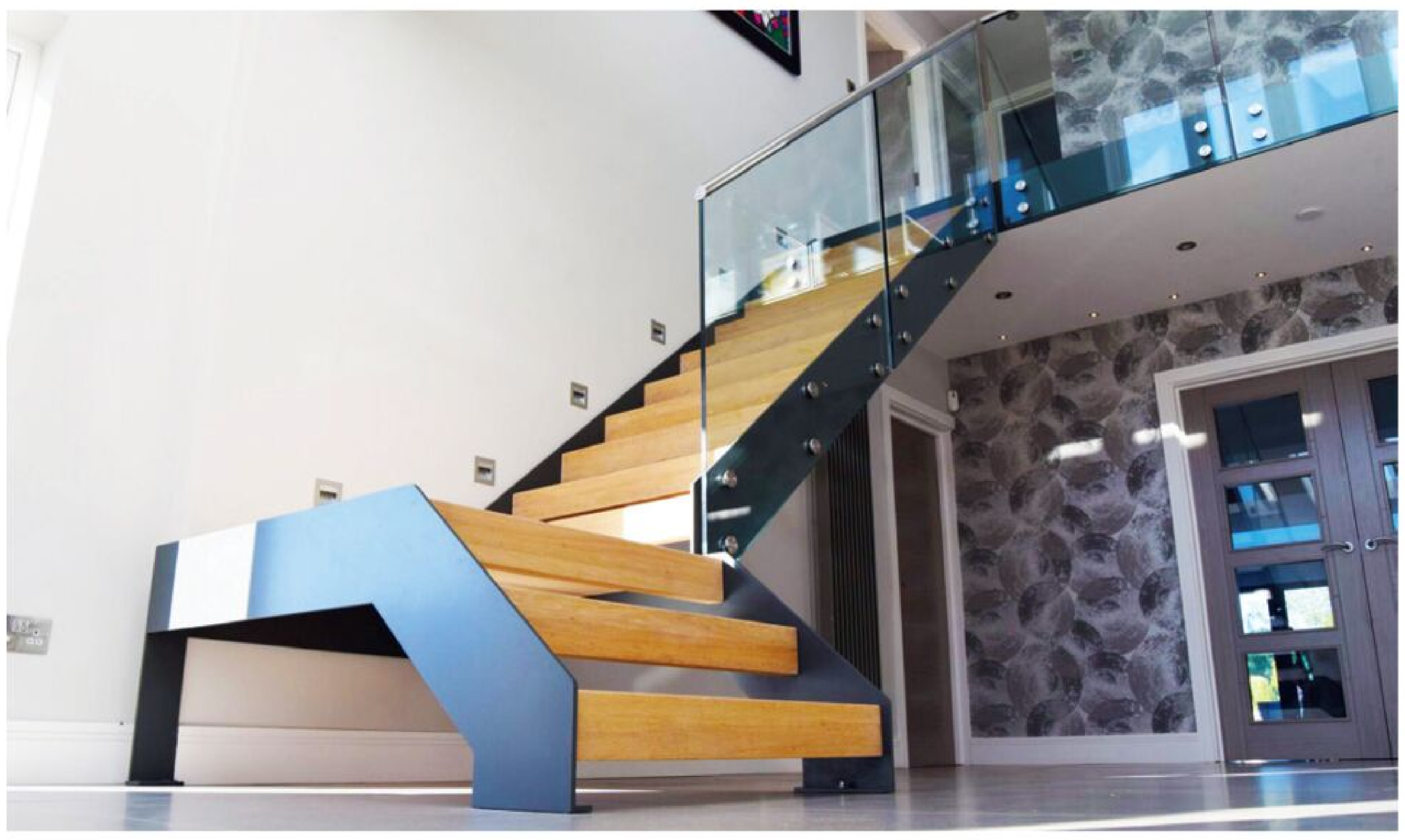

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"We want to give people a chance to see the quality that we achieve in our workshop first hand, From precision joinery and bespoke steel manufacture to the final paint finish, we hope visitors will find inspiring ideas for their own upcoming projects."

Stair Pro Ltd was established in 2016 with ambitions to set a new standard in the design, performance and reliability of architectural metalwork. Seven years on, the team have developed an impressive portfolio across private and business customers. But no two projects are the same.

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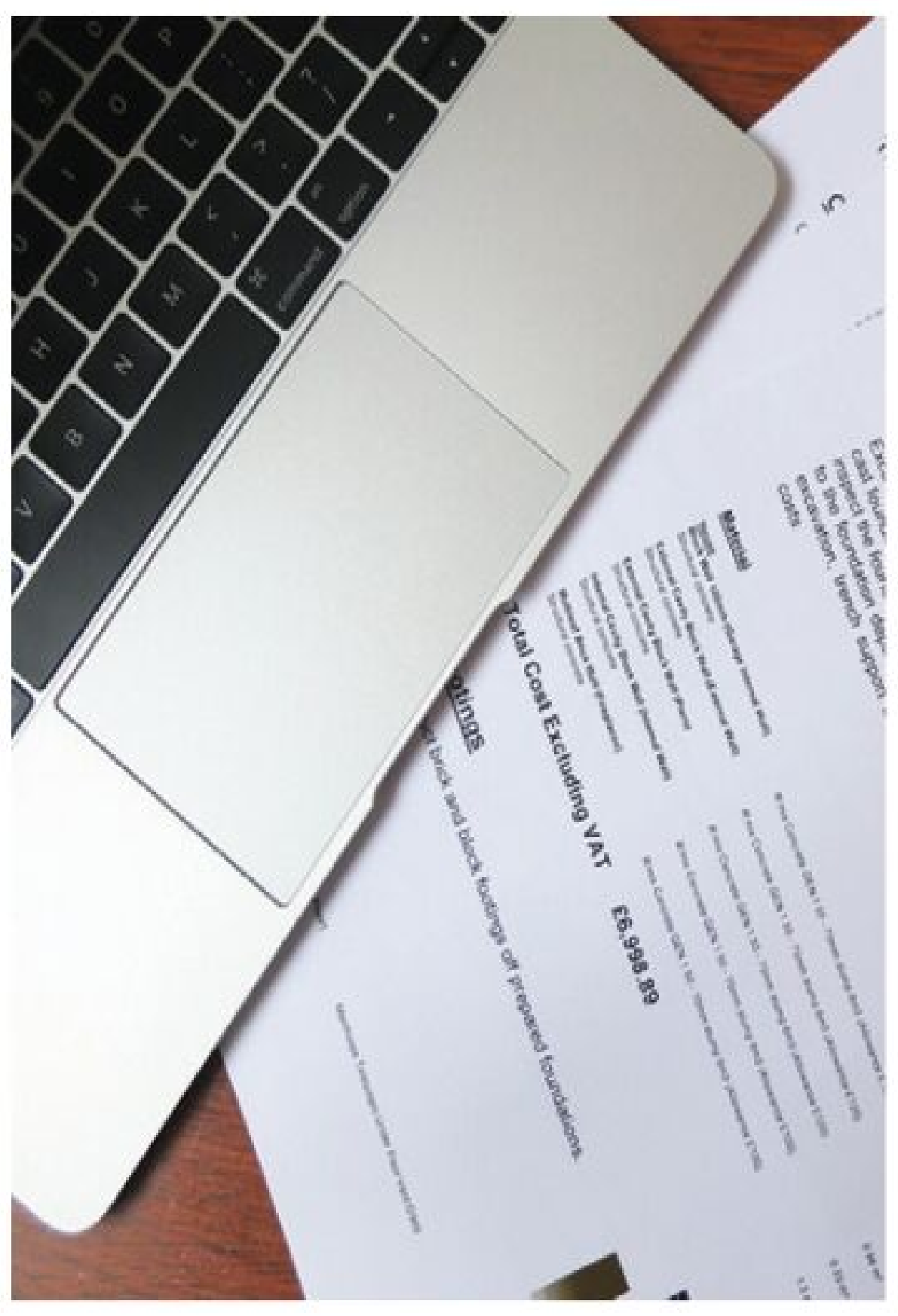

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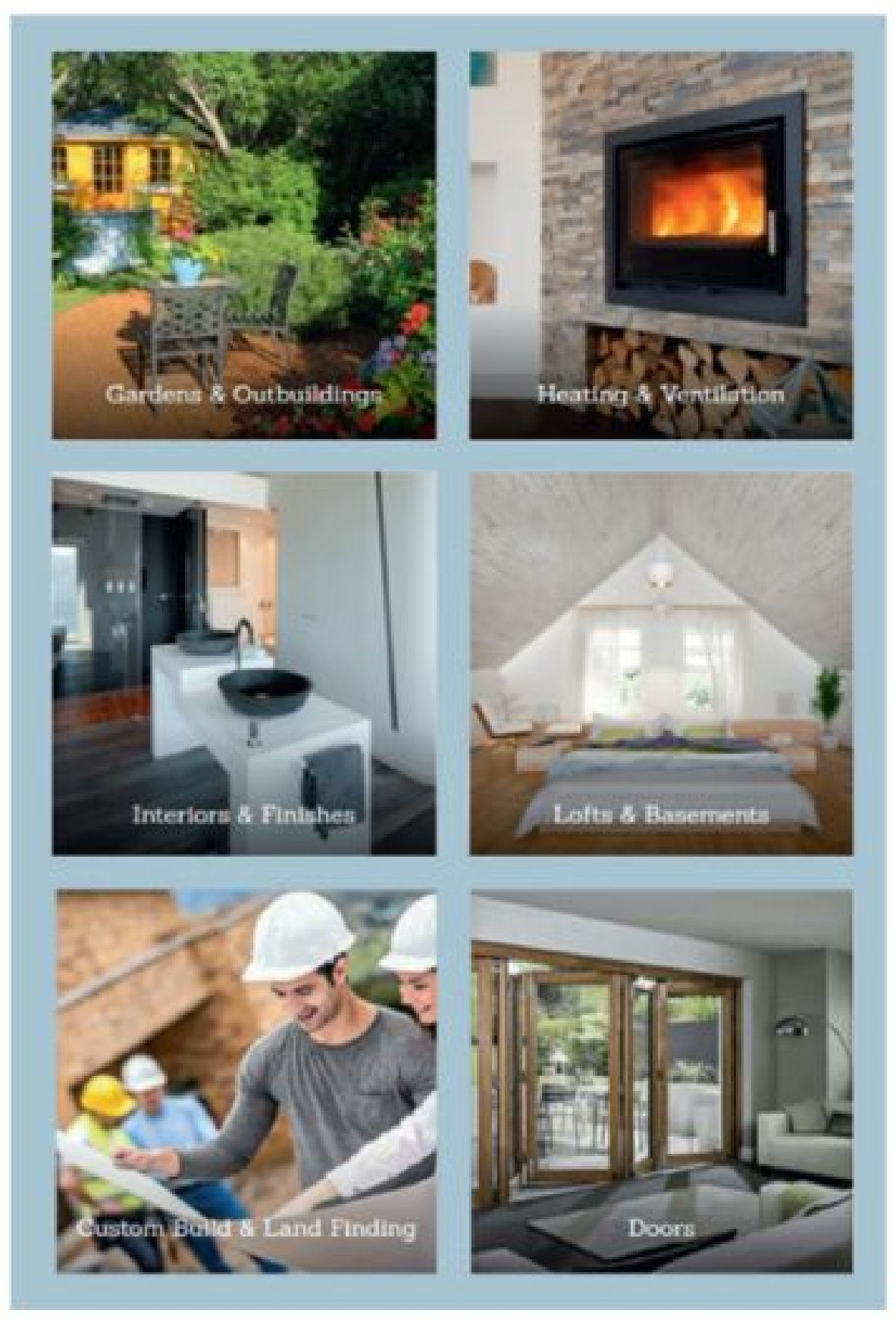

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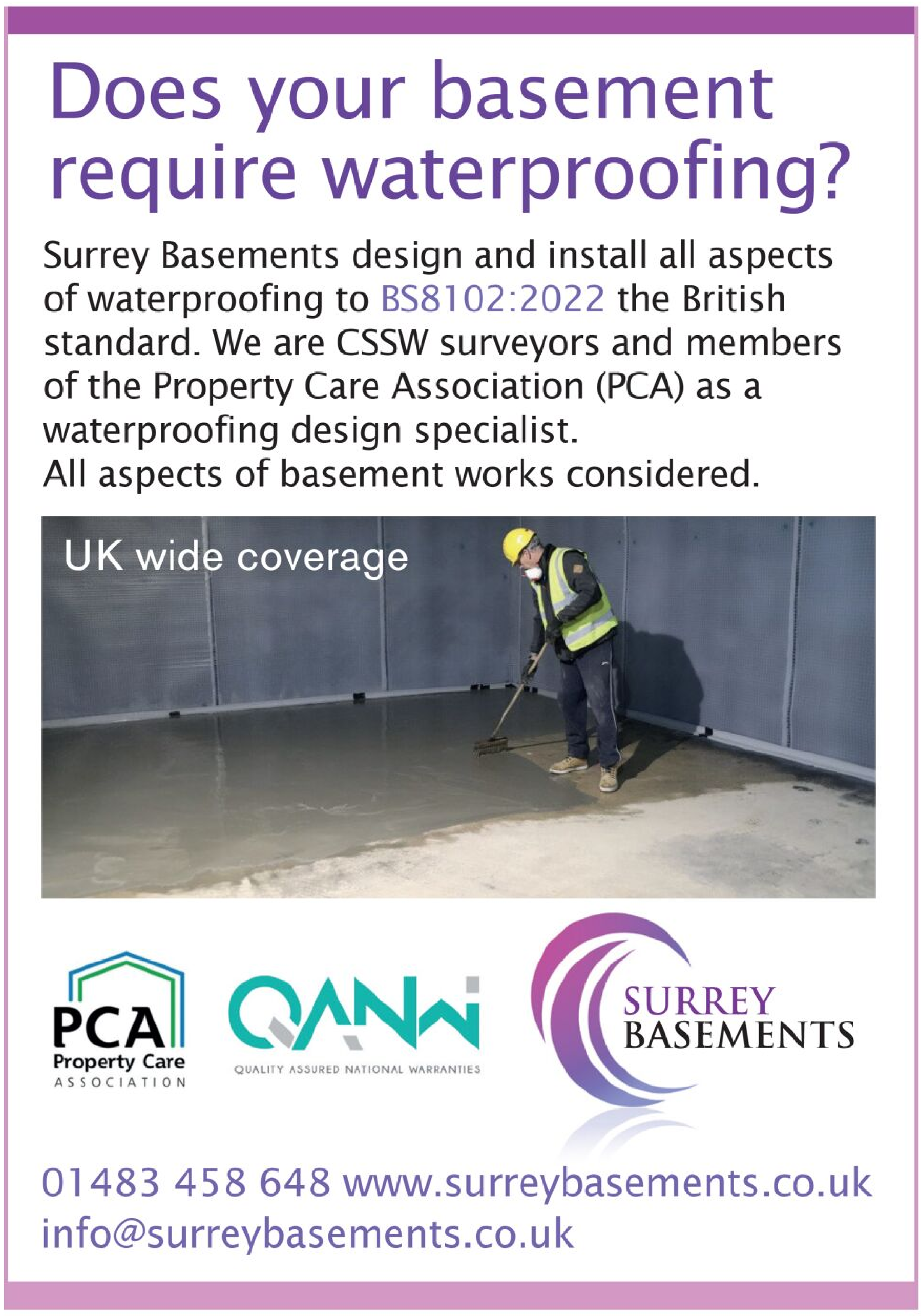

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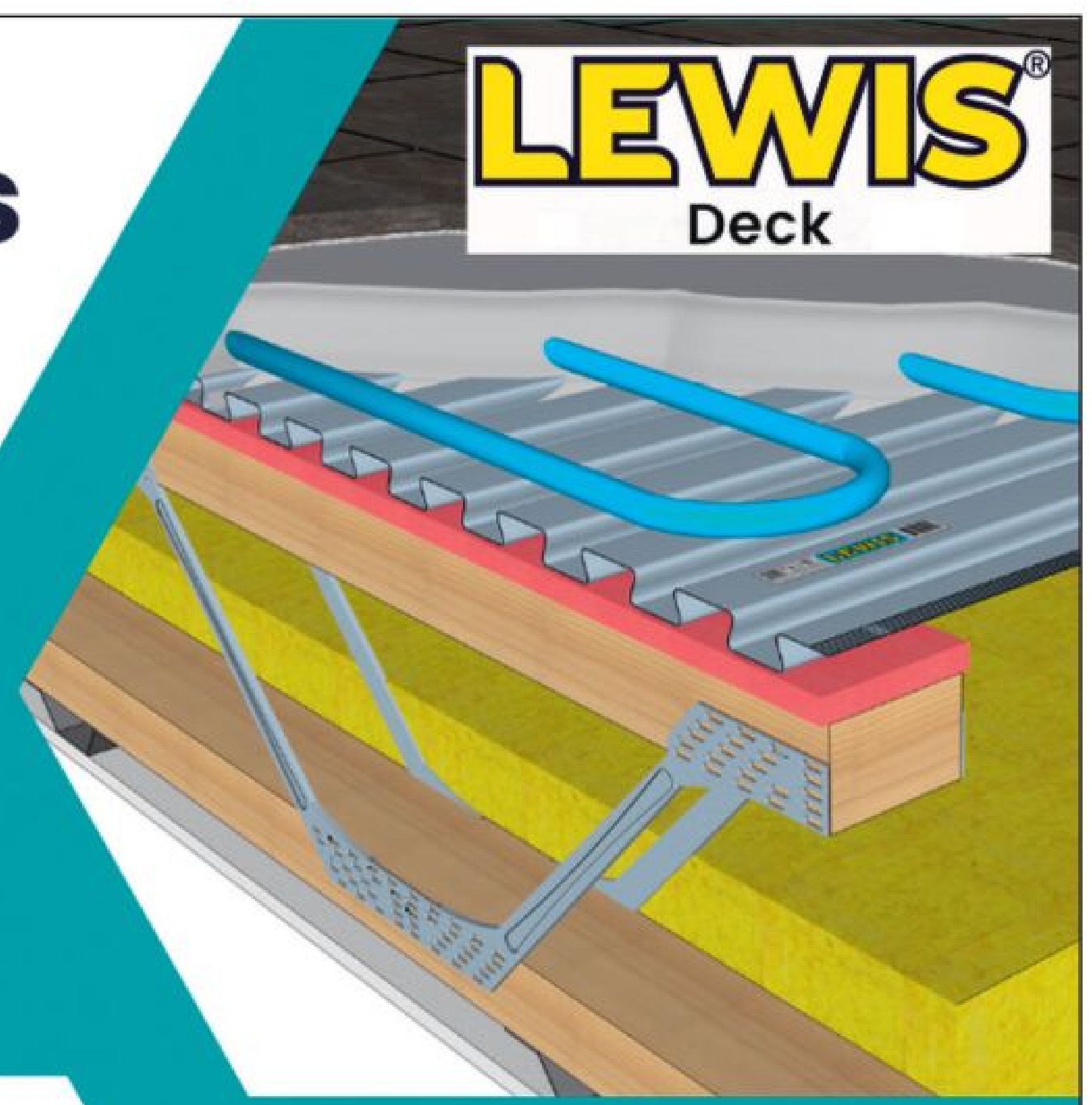

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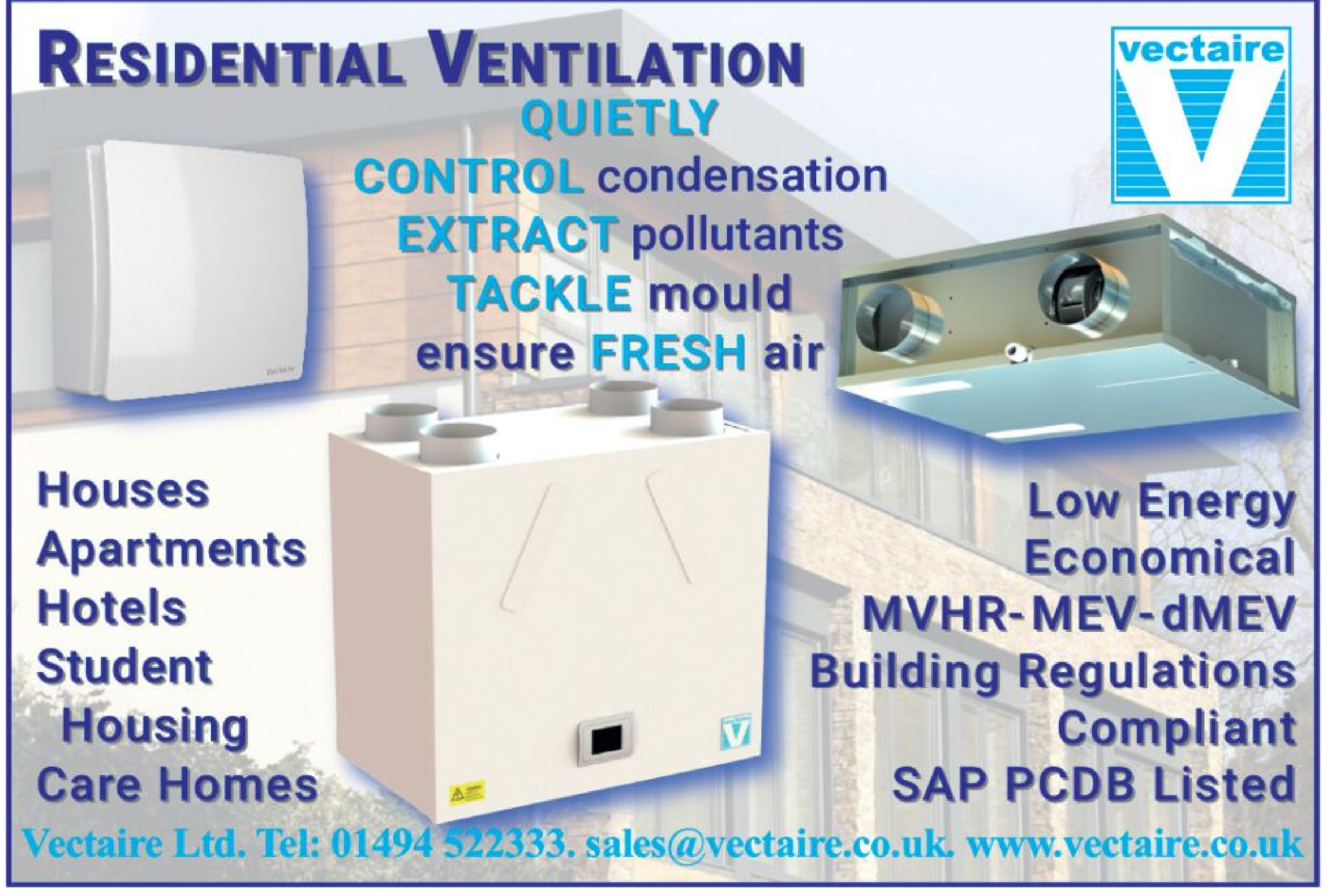

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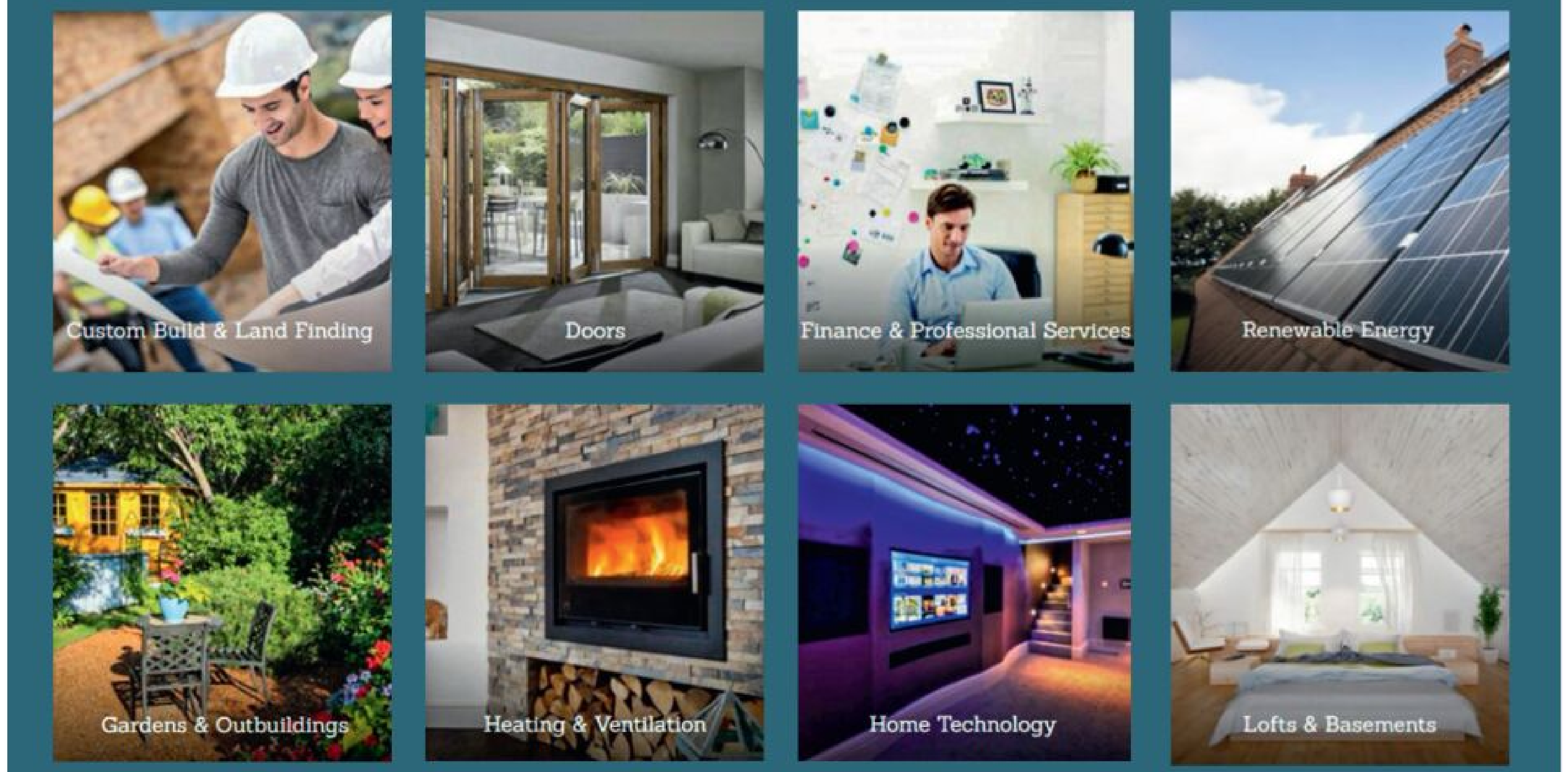

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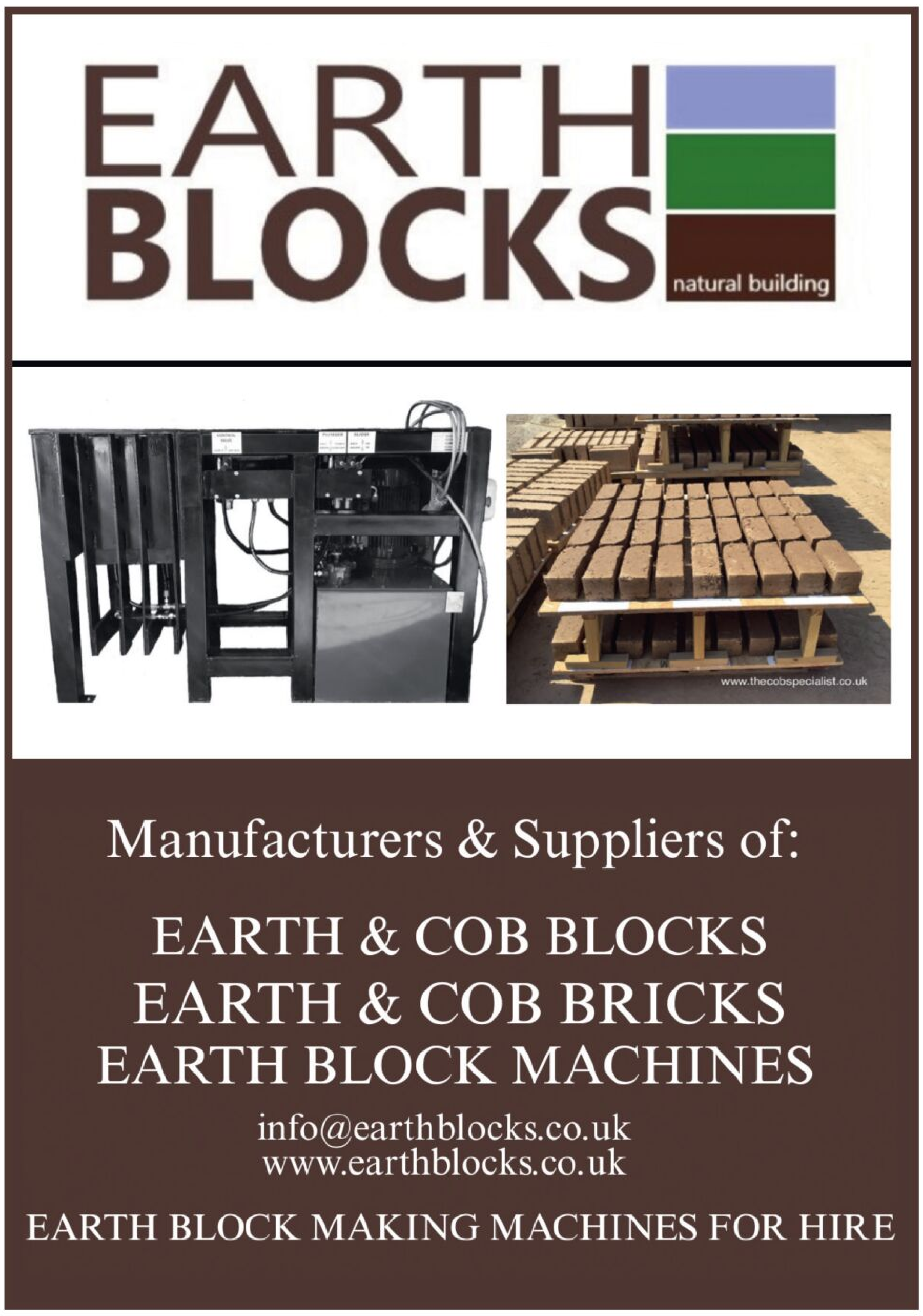

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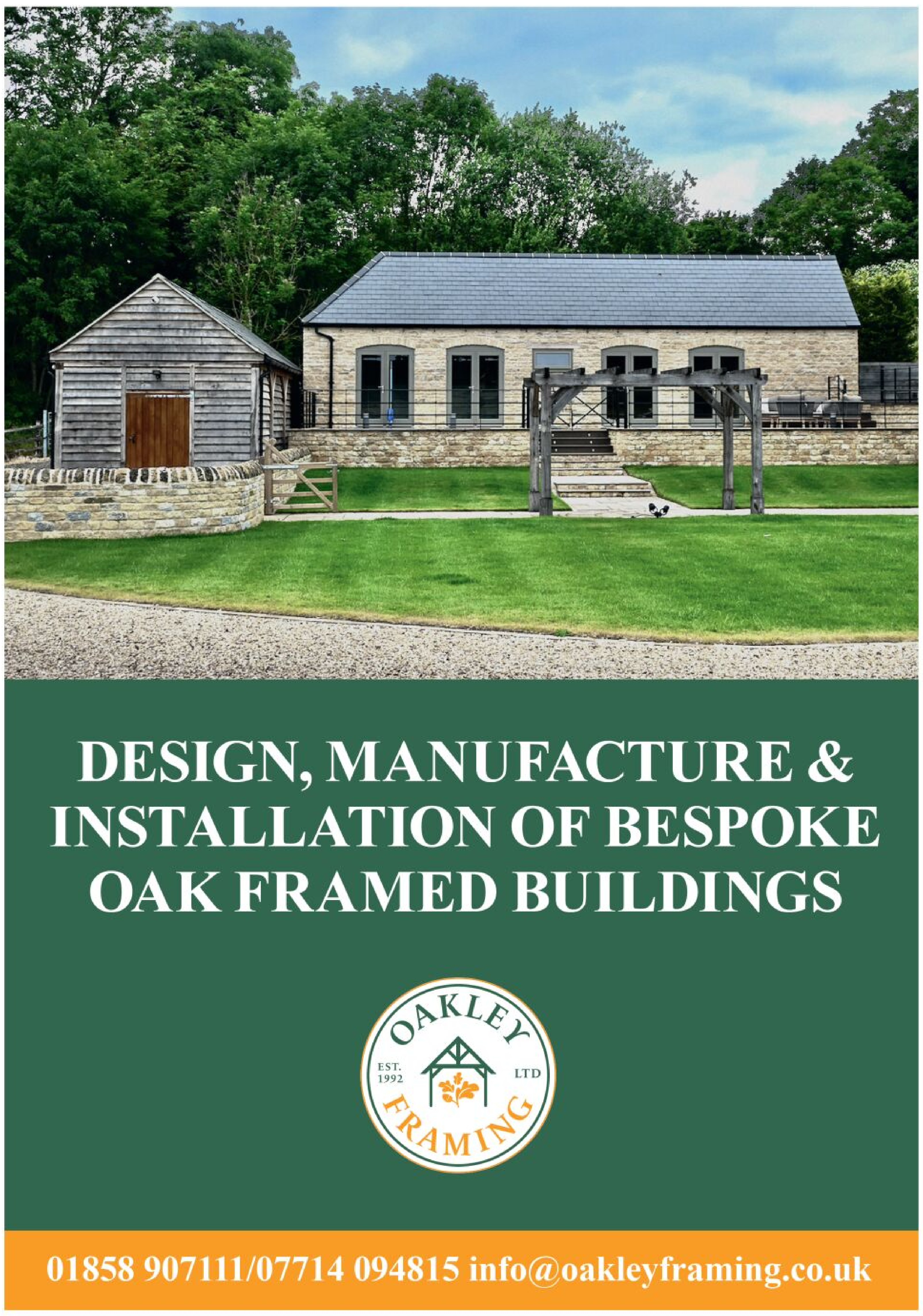

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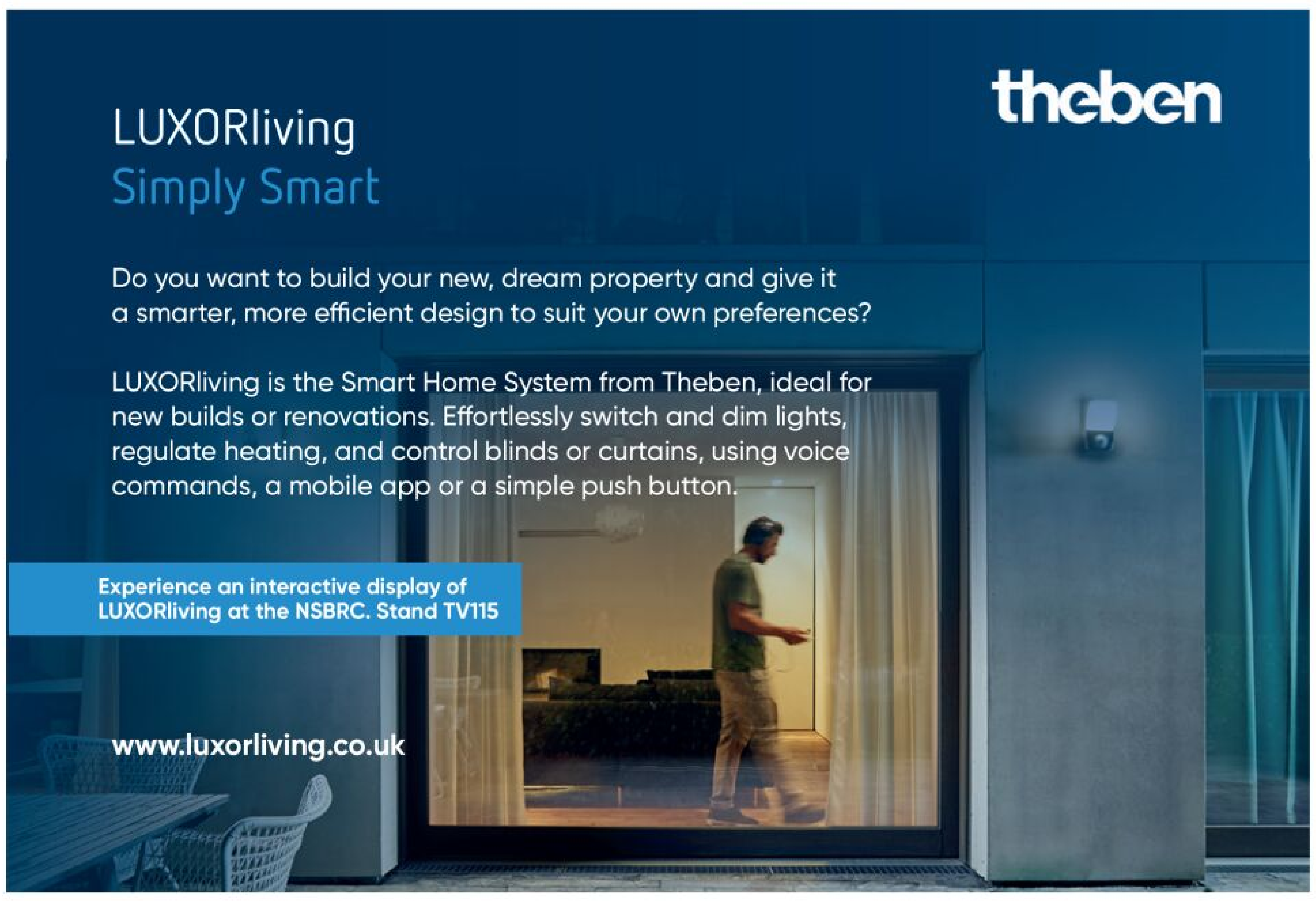

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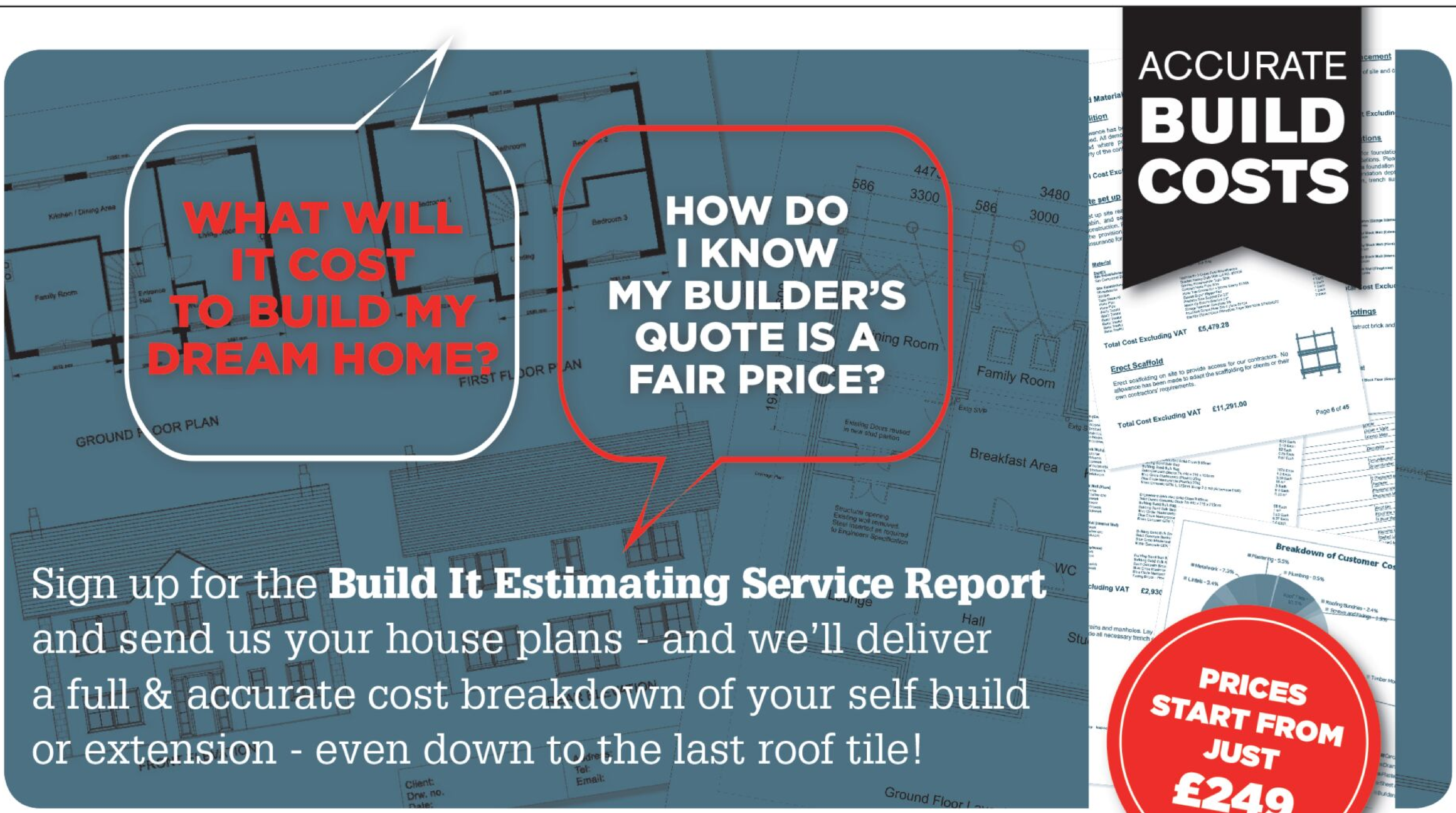

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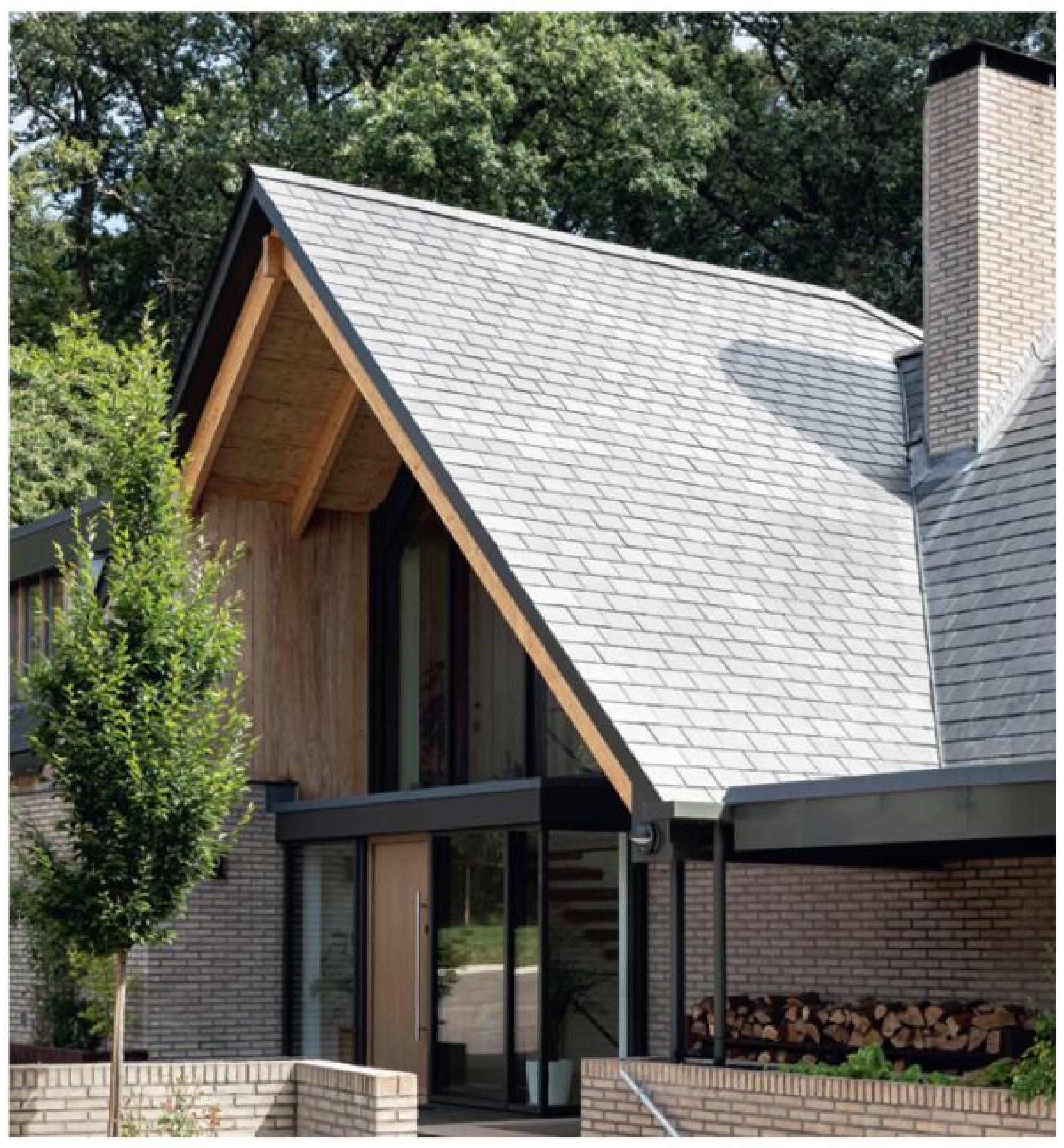

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ARCHITECT'S VIEW

Director of Erbar Mattes Architects **Demian Erbar** explores the benefits of a reversed floorplan, and how to create comfortable and functional spaces

Designing an effective upside-down layout

What is a reversed layout, and what types of projects are best suited to this kind of design?

An upside-down layout involves inverting the traditional floorplan. Bedrooms are placed at arrival level, usually the ground floor, with your living spaces, such as lounge and kitchen, on the first storey.

When designing a new home, it's useful to avoid pre-conceived ideas of how it should be structured and organised, to allow the brief to develop organically from your own preferences, as well as the requirements of your site. Consider what your unique plot offers and how to make the most of your space, while designing a home and layout that makes sense for your lifestyle.

Although the majority of homes are built with a standard floorplan (bedrooms above the living spaces), reversing this default setup can reveal surprising views, emphasise proximity to trees and other site-specific opportunities, to improve the living spaces where we spend most of our time. This can often be the case on sites with sloping terrain, particularly in lower density urban or rural areas.

What are the benefits of choosing to arrange your living spaces at first-floor level, with bedrooms below?

By flipping your home around, you open up some great design possibilities. It's possible to incorporate alternative floor levels, explore ceiling heights, vaulted roof forms, rooflights, and more. A traditional layout often prevents the ability to incorporate these into the shared living spaces you spend most time in, because they're at ground-floor level and limited by the ceiling above. Elevating these rooms allows you to incorporate unique features and uncover particular moments around your site.

Considering the future use of your home and extending the lifespan and usability of your spaces is essential for creating a truly sustainable building and making the most of your project. Placing bedrooms on the ground floor offers clear accessibility benefits. Even if you do not need this in the immediate future, planning a room or zone that can be converted later allows for easy access if it becomes essential for your continued enjoyment and usage of the property. If you prioritise a high-quality structure, with a high-performance building envelope that will ensure each area of your home can maintain a comfortable living temperature both in the cold and warmer months, then your interior layout can be flexible. Consider your floors and zones as different volumes which can be adapted and altered when required. Built-in flexibility is key to any successful project, particularly when considering the entire lifespan of your home, including future potential users.

The visualisation of this project by Erbar Mattes Architects features the principal rooms at first-floor level. The home is located on a gently sloping plot with vistas over the picturesque Surrey Hills and Sussex Downs

What are the key considerations to ensure that your floorplan flows smoothly and effectively?

With this kind of layout, you'll have to consider how to maintain privacy within the house while creating a good flow through your spaces. A reversed floorplan requires careful attention to the interaction between different rooms to create a home that feels cohesive and functional, as well as comfortable. Privacy, links to the outdoors and sound insulation are top considerations in a layout where living areas are upstairs and bedrooms are below.

You'll likely want to maintain a connection between your living spaces and your garden, to achieve that sought-after indoor-outdoor flow and embrace the benefits of your whole site. Opting for a roof terrace or balcony can create a gradual connection with the exterior and ensure your living spaces aren't cut off from the outside. With design features such as these, it's important to consider potential issues of overlooking with nearby properties.

Glazing placement becomes even more critical in a reversed layout. Large windows in upstairs living spaces maximise access to natural light throughout your home and can provide great panoramic views, but it's also essential to carefully consider the orientation and position of windows to bring in light without sacrificing privacy. Acoustic insulation is also paramount in any home design, but especially when considering upside-down living. A comfortable and enjoyable home requires good acoustic separation, particularly between bedrooms and living areas. Solid construction and excellent levels of insulation are key for maintaining this. Look into the acoustic properties of your chosen construction system, and then specify the best quality insulation material and thickness that your budget allows.

In what ways can an upside-down layout impact a home's energy efficiency and overall sustainability?

Having living spaces upstairs can sometimes help to improve the building's passive solar performance, which is especially valuable in the colder months. Living areas with larger windows on the upper floors will receive more sunlight, helping to naturally warm these spaces during the day. Plus, higher ceiling heights, combined with raised, openable windows or rooflights for purge ventilation will contribute to improved air quality and great airflow throughout your property. Equally, bedrooms, used primarily at night, can benefit from the cooler, shaded ground level while you enjoy the natural light in your most-used spaces on the first floor.

To capitalise on these benefits, use materials that contribute to energy efficiency and temperature regulation. High-performance windows and thermal glazing can help retain warmth in winter and block excess heat in summer, ensuring consistent comfort.

Demian Erbar is the director and co-founder of Erbar Mattes Architects. The practice focuses on creating projects grounded in their surroundings, aiming to enhance a location's essential qualities, as well as design purposeful, characterful buildings. For more information call **020 3865 8066** or visit **erbarmattes.com**

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